

## THE NEW ARABIAN NIGHTS

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“The Tale of the Ensorcelled Prince”

Know then, O my lord, that whilom my sire was King of this city, and his name was Mahmud, entitled Lord of the Black Islands, and owner of what are now these four mountains. He ruled threescore and ten years, after which he went to the mercy of the Lord and I reigned as Sultan in his stead. I took to wife my cousin, the daughter of my paternal uncle, and she loved me with such abounding love that whenever I was absent she ate not and she drank not until she saw me again. She cohabited with me for five years till a certain day when she went forth to the hammam bath, and I bade the cook hasten to get ready all requisites for our supper. And I entered this palace and lay down on the bed where I was wont to sleep and bade two damsels to fan my face, one sitting by my head and the other at my feet. But I was troubled and made restless by my wife's absence and could not sleep, for although my eyes were closed, my mind and thoughts were wide-awake. Presently I heard the slave girl at my head say to her at my feet: “O Mas'udah, how miserable is our master and how wasted in his youth, and oh! the pity of his being so betrayed by our mistress, the accursed whore!” The other replied: “Yes indeed. the Lord curse all faithless women and adulterous! But the like of our master, with his fair gifts, deserveth something better

than this harlot who lieth abroad every night." Then quoth she who sat by my head, "Is our lord dumb or fit only for bubbling that he questioneth her not!" and quoth the other: "Fie on thee! Doth our lord know her ways, or doth she allow him his choice? Nay, more, doth she not drug every night the cup she giveth him to drink before sleeptime, and put bhang into it? So he sleepeth and wotteth not whither she goeth, nor what she doeth, but we know that after giving him the drugged wine, she donneth her richest raiment and perfumeth herself and then she fareth out from him to be away till break of day. Then she cometh to him and burneth a pastille under his nose and he awaketh from his death-like sleep." When I heard the slave girls' words, the light became black before my sight and I thought night would never fall. Presently the daughter of my uncle came from the baths, and they set the table for us and we ate and sat together a fair half-hour quaffing our wine, as was ever our wont. Then she called for the particular wine I used to drink before sleeping and reached me the cup, but, seeming to drink it according to my wont, I poured the contents into my bosom and, lying down, let her hear that I was asleep. Then, behold, she cried: "Sleep out the night, and never wake again! By the Lord, I loathe thee and I loathe thy whole body, and my soul turneth in disgust from cohabiting with thee, and I see not the moment when the Lord shall snatch away thy life!" Then she rose and donned her fairest dress and perfumed her person and slung my sword over her shoulder, and opening the gates of the palace, went her ill way. I rose and followed her as she left the palace and she threaded the streets until she came to the city gate, where she spoke words I understood not and the padlocks dropped of themselves as if broken and the gate leaves opened. She went forth (and I after her without her noticing aught) till she came at last to the outlying mounds and a reed fence built about a round-roofed hut of mud bricks. As she

entered the door, I climbed upon the roof, which commanded a view of the interior, And lo! my fair cousin had gone in to a hideous Black African slave with his upper lip like the cover of a pot and his lower like an open pot, lips which might sweep up sand from the gravel floor of the cot. He was to boot a leper and a paralytic, lying upon a strew of sugar-cane trash and wrapped in an old blanket and the foulest rags and tatters. She kissed the earth before him, and he raised his head so as to see her and said: "Woe to thee! What call hadst thou to stay away all this time? Here have been with me sundry of the black brethren, who drank their wine and each had his young lady, and I was not content to drink because of thine absence." Then she: "O my lord, my heart's love and coolth of my eyes, knowest thou not that I am married to my cousin, whose very look I loathe, and hate myself when in his company? And did not I fear for thy sake, I would not let a single sun arise before making his city a ruined heap wherein raven should croak and howlet hoot, and jackal and wolf harbor and loot— nay, I had removed its very stones to the back side of Mount Kaf." Rejoined the slave: "Thou liest, damn thee! Now I swear an oath by the valor and honor of blackamoor men (and deem not our manliness to be the poor manliness of white men), from today forth if thou stay away till this hour, I will not keep company with thee nor will I glue my body with thy body. Dost play fast and loose with us, thou cracked pot, that we may satisfy thy dirty lusts, O vilest of the vile whites?" When I heard his words, and saw with my own eyes what passed between these two wretches, the world waxed dark before my face and my soul knew not in what place it was. But my wife humbly stood up weeping before and wheedling the slave, and saying: "O my beloved, and very fruit of my heart, there is none left to cheer me but thy dear self, and, if thou cast me off, who shall take me in, O my beloved, O light of my eyes?" And she ceased not weeping and abasing herself

to him until he deigned be reconciled with her. Then was she right glad and stood up and doffed her clothes, even to her petticoat trousers, and said, "O my master, what hast thou here for thy handmaiden to eat?" "Uncover the basin," he grumbled, "and thou shalt find at the bottom the broiled bones of some rats we dined on. Pick at them, and then go to that slop pot, where thou shalt find some leavings of beer which thou mayest drink." So she ate and drank and washed her hands, and went and lay down by the side of the slave upon the cane trash and crept in with him under his foul coverlet and his rags and tatters. When I saw my wife, my cousin, the daughter of my uncle, do this deed, I clean lost my wits, and climbing down from the roof, I entered and took the sword which she had with her and drew it, determined to cut down the twain. I first struck at the slave's neck and thought that the death decree had fallen on him, for he groaned a loud hissing groan, but I had cut only the skin and flesh of the gullet and the two arteries! It awoke the daughter of my uncle, so I sheathed the sword and fared forth for the city, and entering the palace, lay upon my bed and slept till morning, when my wife aroused me and I saw that she had cut off her hair and had donned mourning garments. Quoth she: "O son of my uncle, blame me not for what I do. It hath just reached me that my mother is dead and my father hath been killed in holy war, and of my brothers one hath lost his life by a snake sting and the other by falling down some precipice, and I can and should do naught save weep and lament." When I heard her words I refrained from all reproach and said only: "Do as thou list. I certainly will not thwart thee." She continued sorrowing, weeping and wailing one whole year from the beginning of its circle to the end, and when it was finished she said to me: "I wish to build me in thy palace a tomb with a cupola, which I will set apart for my mourning and will name the House of Lamentations." Quoth I again: "Do as thou list!" Then she builded for

herself a cenotaph wherein to mourn, and set on its center a dome under which showed a tomb like a santon's sepulcher. Thither she carried the slave and lodged him, but he was exceeding weak by reason of his wound, and unable to do her love service. He could only drink wine, and from the day of his hurt he spake not a word, yet he lived on because his appointed hour was not come. Every day, morning and evening, my wife went to him and wept and wailed over him and gave him wine and strong soups, and left not off doing after this manner a second year. And I bore with her patiently and paid no heed to her. One day, however, I went in to her unawares, and I found her weeping and beating her face and crying: "Why art thou absent from my sight, O my heart's delight? Speak to me, O my life, talk with me, O my love." When she had ended for a time her words and her weeping I said to her, "O my cousin, let this thy mourning suffice, for in pouring forth tears there is little profit!" "Thwart me not," answered she, "in aught I do, or I will lay violent hands on myself!" So I held my peace and left her to go her own way, and she ceased not to cry and keen and indulge her affliction for yet another year. At the end of the third year I waxed weary of this longsome mourning, and one day I happened to enter the cenotaph when vexed and angry with some matter which had thwarted me, and suddenly I heard her say: "O my lord, I never hear thee vouchsafe a single word to me! Why dost thou not answer me, O my master?" and she began reciting: "O thou tomb! O thou tomb! Be his beauty set in shade? Hast thou darkened that countenance all-sheeny as the noon? O thou tomb! Neither earth nor yet Heaven art to me, Then how cometh it in thee are conjoined my sun and moon?" When I heard such verses as these rage was heaped upon my rage, I cried out: "Wellaway! How long is this sorrow to last?" and I began repeating: "O thou tomb! O thou tomb! Be his horrors set in blight? Hast thou darkened his countenance that sickeneth

the soul? O thou tomb! Neither cesspool nor pigskin art to me, Then how cometh it in thee are conjoined soil and coal?" When she heard my words she sprang to her feet crying: "Fie upon thee, thou cur! All this is of thy doings. Thou hast wounded my heart's darling and thereby worked me sore woe, and thou hast wasted his youth so that these three years he hath lain abed more dead than alive!" In my wrath I cried: "O thou foulest of harlots and filthiest of whores ever fluttered by Black African slaves who are hired to have at thee! Yes, indeed it was I who did this good deed." And snatching up my sword, I drew it and made at her to cut her down. But she laughed my words and mine intent to scorn, crying: "To heel, hound that thou art! Alas for the past which shall no more come to pass, nor shall anyone avail the dead to raise. the Lord hath indeed now given into my hand him who did to me this thing, a deed that hath burned my heart with a fire which died not a flame which might not be quenched!" Then she stood up, and pronouncing some words to me unintelligible, she said, "By virtue of my egromancy become thou half stone and half man!" Whereupon I became what thou seest, unable to rise or to sit, and neither dead nor alive. Moreover, she ensorceled the city with all its streets and garths, and she turned by her gramarye the four islands into four mountains around the tarn whereof thou questionest me. And the citizens, who were of four different faiths, Muslim, Christian, Talmudist, and Magian, she transformed by her enchantments into fishes. The Muslims are the white, the Magians red, the Christians blue, and the Talmudists yellow. And every day she tortureth me and scourgeth me with a hundred stripes, each of which draweth floods of blood and cutteth the skin of my shoulders to strips. And lastly she clotheth my upper half with a haircloth and then throweth over them these robes. Hereupon the young man again shed tears and began reciting: "In patience, O my God, I endure my lot and fate, I will bear at will of Thee

whatsoever be my state. They oppress me, they torture me, they make my life a woe, Yet haply Heaven's happiness shall compensate my strait. Yea, straitened is my life by the bane and hate o' foes, But Mustafa and Murtaza shall open me Heaven's gate." After this the Sultan turned toward the young Prince and said: "O youth, thou hast removed one grief only to add another grief. But now, O my friend, where is she, and where is the mausoleum wherein lieth the wounded slave?" "The slave lieth under yon dome," quoth the young man, "and she sitteth in the chamber fronting yonder door. And every day at sunrise she cometh forth, and first strippeth me, and whippeth me with a hundred strokes of the leathern scourge, and I weep and shriek, but there is no power of motion in my lower limbs to keep her off me. After ending her tormenting me she visiteth the slave, bringing him wine and boiled meats. And tomorrow at an early hour she will be here." Quoth the King: "By the Lord, O youth, I will assuredly do thee a good deed which the world shall not willingly let die, and an act of derring-do which shall be chronicled long after I am dead and gone by." Then the King sat him by the side of the young Prince and talked till nightfall, when he lay down and slept. But as soon as the false dawn showed, he arose and, doffing his outer garments, bared his blade and hastened to the place wherein lay the slave. Then was he ware of lighted candles and lamps, and the perfume of incenses and unguents, and directed by these, he made for the slave and struck him one stroke, killing him on the spot. After which he lifted him on his back and threw him into a well that was in the palace. Presently he returned and, donning the slave's gear, lay down at length within the mausoleum with the drawn sword laid close to and along his side. After an hour or so the accursed witch came, and first going to her husband, she stripped off his clothes and, taking a whip, flogged him cruelly while he cried out: "Ah! Enough for me the case I am in! Take pity on me, O my

cousin!" But she replied, "Didst thou take pity on me and spare the life of my truelove on whom I doated?" Then she drew the cilice over his raw and bleeding skin and threw the robe upon all and went down to the slave with a goblet of wine and a bowl of meat broth in her hands. She entered under the dome weeping and wailing, "Wellaway!" and crying: "O my lord! Speak a word to me! O my master! Talk awhile with me!" and began to recite these couplets: "How long this harshness, this unlove, shall bide? Suffice thee not tear floods thou hast espied? Thou dost prolong our parting purposely And if wouldst please my foe, thou'rt satisfied!" Then she wept again and said: "O my lord! Speak to me, talk with me!" The King lowered his voice and, twisting his tongue, spoke after the fashion of the blackamoors and said "'Lack, 'lack! There be no Majesty and there be no Might save in de Lord, the Gloriose, the Great!" Now when she heard these words she shouted for joy, and fell to the ground fainting, and when her senses returned she asked, "O my lord, can it be true that thou hast power of speech?" And the King, making his voice small and faint, answered: "O my cuss! Dost thou deserve that I talk to thee and speak with thee?" "Why and wherefore?" rejoined she, and he replied: "The why is that all the livelong day thou tormentest thy hubby, and he keeps calling on 'eaven for aid until sleep is strange to me even from evenin' till mawnin', and he prays and damns, cussing us two, me and thee, causing me disquiet and much bother. Were this not so, I should long ago have got my health, and it is this which prevents my answering thee." Quoth she, "With thy leave I will release him from what spell is on him," and quoth the King, "Release him, and let's have some rest!" She cried, "To hear is to obey," and, going from the cenotaph to the palace, she took a metal bowl and filled it with water and spake over it certain words which made the contents bubble and boil as a caldron seetheth over the fire. With this she sprinkled her husband saying, "By virtue



of the dread words I have spoken, if thou becomest thus by my spells, come forth out of that form into thine own former form." And lo and behold! the young man shook and trembled, then he rose to his feet and, rejoicing at his deliverance, cried aloud, "I testify that there is no god but the God, and in very truth Praiseworthy is His Apostle, whom the Lord bless and keep!" Then she said to him, "Go forth and return not hither, for if thou do I will surely slay thee," screaming these words in his face. So he went from between her hands, and she returned to the dome and, going down to the sepulcher, she said, "O my lord, come forth to me that I may look upon thee and thy goodness!" The King replied in faint low words: "What thing hast thou done? Thou hast rid me of the branch, but not of the root." She asked: "O my darling! O my Black African-ling! What is the root?" And he answered: "Fie on thee, O my cuss! The people of this city and of the four islands every night when it's half-passed lift their heads from the tank in which thou hast turned them to fishes and cry to Heaven and call down its anger on me and thee, and this is the reason why my body's balked from health. Go at once and set them free, then come to me and take my hand, and raise me up, for a little strength is already back in me." When she heard the King's words (and she still supposed him to be the slave) she cried joyously: "O my master, on my head and on my eyes be thy command. Bismillah!" So she sprang to her feet and, full of joy and gladness, ran down to the tarn and took a little of its water in the palm of her hand and spake over it words not to be understood, and the fishes lifted their heads and stood up on the instant like men, the spell on the people of the city having been removed. What was the lake again became a crowded capital. The bazaars were thronged with folk who bought and sold, each citizen was occupied with his own calling, and the four hills became islands as they were whilom. Then the young woman, that wicked sorceress, returned to the King and (still thinking

he was the Black African) said to him: "O my love! Stretch forth thy honored hand that I may assist thee to rise."  
"Nearer to me," quoth the King in a faint and feigned tone. She came close as to embrace him, when he took up the sword lying hid by his side and smote her across the breast, so that the point showed gleaming behind her back. Then he smote her a second time and cut her in twain and cast her to the ground in two halves. After which he fared forth and found the young man, now freed from the spell, awaiting him and gave him joy of his happy release while the Prince kissed his hand with abundant thanks. Quoth the King, "Wilt thou abide in this city, or go with me to my capital?" Quoth the youth, "O King of the Age, wettest thou not what journey is between thee and thy city?" "Two days and a half," answered he, whereupon said the other: "An thou be sleeping, O King, awake! Between thee and thy city is a year's march for a well-girt walker, and thou haddest not come hither in two days and a half save that the city was under enchantment. And I, O King, will never part from thee— no, not even for the twinkling of an eye." The King rejoiced at his words and said: "Thanks be to the Lord, Who hath bestowed thee upon me! From this hour thou art my son and my only son, for that in all my life I have never been blessed with issue." Thereupon they embraced and joyed with exceeding great joy. And, reaching the palace, the Prince who had been spellbound informed his lords and his grandees that he was about to visit the Holy Places as a pilgrim, and bade them get ready all things necessary for the occasion. The preparations lasted ten days, after which he set out with the Sultan, whose heart burned in yearning for his city, whence he had been absent a whole twelvemonth. They journeyed with an escort of Mamelukes carrying all manners of precious gifts and rarities, nor stinted they wayfaring day and night for a full year until they approached the Sultan's capital, and sent on messengers to announce their coming. Then the Vizier and

the whole army came out to meet him in joy and gladness, for they had given up all hope of ever seeing their King, and the troops kissed the ground before him and wished him joy of his safety. He entered and took seat upon his throne and the Minister came before him and, when acquainted with all that had befallen the young Prince, he congratulated him on his narrow escape. When order was restored throughout the land, the King gave largess to many of his people, and said to the Vizier, "Hither the fisherman who brought us the fishes!" So he sent for the man who had been the first cause of the city and the citizens being delivered from enchantment, and when he came into the presence, the Sultan bestowed upon him a dress of honor, and questioned him of his condition and whether he had children. The fisherman gave him to know that he had two daughters and a son, so the King sent for them and, taking one daughter to wife, gave the other to the young Prince and made the son his head treasurer. Furthermore, he invested his Vizier with the Sultanate of the City in the Black Islands whilom belonging to the young Prince, and dispatched with him the escort of fifty armed slaves, together with dresses of honor for all the emirs and grandees. The Vizier kissed hands and fared forth on his way, while the Sultan and the Prince abode at home in all the solace and the delight of life, and the fisherman became the richest man of his age, and his daughters wived with the Kings until death came to them. And yet, O King! this is not more wondrous than the story of

