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# ARABIAN LOVE TALES



# ARABIAN LOVE TALES

*Being Romances Drawn from the Book of  
the Thousand Nights and One Night  
Rendered into English from the Literal  
French Translation of Dr. J. C. Mardrus*

*by*

POWYS MATHERS

*and Illustrated by*

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## FOREWORD

IT is not quite two hundred and fifty years since the tales of *The Thousand Nights and One Night* made their first incomplete appearance in English under the title which has since become so familiar, *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. But in Arabic and other oriental tongues their history goes back into a remote, romantic past—to fifteenth century Egypt, to tenth-century Arabia, and to a Persia and an India more ancient still. They must have undergone many changes which can never be traced, for they were not “literature” to be recorded by scholars in cherished manuscripts; they were the trivial amusements of the people, frowned upon by pedant and puritan as frivolous or licentious, but told over and over again by the storytellers in the bazaars or the bedouin in desert encampments, and passed by word of mouth from one generation and one country to another along the caravan trails, until at last an Egyptian Arab thought it worth while to write them down.

It was a French orientalist, Antoine Galland, who first revealed their enchantments to the western world, by putting them into French in 1704, and it was his version which the unknown “Grub Street translator” did into English—for the success of the French edition was immediate and international. There have been some notable direct translations since, including those of Henry Torrens, John Payne and Sir Richard Burton, made from the Arabic with scholarly care and varying degrees of readability. But the “general reader” is unlikely to find any of them so attractive as the version drawn upon in this volume, which was made by the late Powys Mathers from the famous modern French edition of J. C. Mardrus. The reader is rapt away at once into a half-fabulous, strangely convincing world of merciless heat and dust, moonlit gardens and curtained harims, where love and lust, chivalry and cruelty, are woven so eloquently into the tales whose fascination kept King Shahryār from sleep and Shahrazād’s throat from the fatal scimitar.



## THE TALE OF KING SHAHRYĀR AND OF HIS BROTHER, KING SHAHZAMĀN

It is related—but Allāh is all wise and all knowing, all powerful and all beneficent—that there was, in the tide and show of ancient time and the passage of the age and of the moment, a king among the kings of Sāsān, in the isles of India and China. He was master of armies and auxiliaries, of slaves and of a great following; and he had two sons, one tall and the other small. Both were heroic horsemen; but the taller was the greater in this exercise and reigned over lands and governed with justice among men, so that the peoples of the land and of the kingdom loved him. His name was King Shahryār. The smaller brother was called King Shahzamān and ruled over Samarkand al-Ajam.

Both lived in their countries and were just rulers of the people for a space of twenty years; by the end of which time each was at the height of his splendour and his growth.

This was the way with them until the tall king was seized by a violent longing to see his brother. Then he commanded his wazīr to depart and return with him: and the wazīr answered: “I hear and I obey.”

The wazīr set out and, arriving in all security by the grace of Allāh, entered the presence of the brother, wished him peace, and told him the purpose of his journey.

King Shahzamān answered: “I hear and I obey.” Then he made preparations for his departure and for the going out of his tents, his camels, and mules; his slaves and fighting-men. Lastly he raised his own wazīr to the governorship, and departed to seek the lands of his brother.

But, in the middle of the night, he recalled a thing which he had left forgotten at the palace. Returning and entering, he found his wife stretched on her bed and being embraced by a black slave. At this sight, the world darkened before his face and he said within his

soul: "If such a thing has come to pass when I have hardly left the city, what would the conduct of this wanton be if I were absent for long at my brother's house?" So he drew his sword and with one stroke killed them upon the carpets of the bed. Then he returned and, ordering his camp to move forward, journeyed through the night till he came to his brother's city.

His brother rejoiced at his approach, went out to meet him and, greeting him, wished him peace; also he adorned the city for him, and began to speak with him jovially. But King Shahzamān remembered the affair of his wife, and a cloud of grief veiled him; his cheeks became sallow and his body frail. King Shahryār, seeing him in this pass and thinking it was due to his exile from lands and kingdom, questioned him no further on the subject and let him be. But, on a later day, he said: "My brother, I know not! and yet I see your body grow frail and your cheeks sallow." Shahzamān answered: "My brother, I am stricken in the heart of my heart." But he did not reveal what he had seen happen to his wife. So King Shahryār continued: "Then come hunting and coursing with me, for in that pursuit perhaps your breast may throw off this trouble." But King Shahzamān had no wish to do so; and his brother went out to hunt alone.

Now there were in the King's palace certain windows that looked on to the garden, and, as King Shahzamān leaned there and looked out, the door of the palace opened and twenty women slaves with twenty men slaves came from it; and the wife of the King, his brother, was among them and walked there in all her bright beauty. When they came to the pool of a fountain they all undressed and mingled one with another. Suddenly, on the King's wife crying: "O Masud! Yā Masud!", a gigantic negro ran towards her, embraced her and, turning her upon her back, enjoyed her. At this signal, all the other men slaves did the same with the women and they continued thus a long while, not ceasing their kisses and embraces and goings in and the like until the approach of dawn.

At this sight the King's brother said within himself: "By Allāh, mine is even a lighter misfortune than his." So he let his grief and discontent slip from him, saying to himself: "Truly, this is more terrible than all which happened to me." And from that moment he began to drink again and to eat without pause.

Meanwhile the King, his brother, came back from hunting, and the two wished each other peace. Then King Shahryār, observing his brother Shahzamān, saw that colour and life had come back to him and further that he, who had so long dealt sparingly with his food, now ate abundantly. So, in his astonishment, he asked him the explanation of this; and the other answered: "Listen and I will tell you the cause of my former pallor. When you sent your wazīr to me to require my presence at your side, I made my preparation for departure and left my city. But afterwards, remembering the present which I destined for you and which I gave you at the palace, I went back and found my wife lying with a black slave, the two sleeping upon the carpets of my bed. I killed the pair of them and made my way to you, thrice wretched in my thought for what had happened. That was the cause of my former paleness and loss of strength. As for the return of colour to my cheeks, spare me, I pray, from speaking of it."

When his brother heard these words, he said: "By Allāh, I conjure you to tell me the other half of the matter!" So King Shahzamān told him all that he had seen. And King Shahryār exclaimed: "First must I see this with my own eyes!" To this his brother answered: "Make it appear, then, that you are going out to hunt and course; but hide instead with me, and you shall be witness of the sight and see the truth of it!"

Immediately the King proclaimed his departure by the public crier and the soldiers went out beyond the city with their tents. The King went forth also and, settling himself in his tents, said to his young slaves: "Let no one enter!" Then he disguised himself, and leaving secretly, went towards the palace where his brother was.



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On his arrival he stationed himself at the window giving on to the garden. Scarcely had an hour passed when the women slaves, circling about their mistress, came into the garden with the men slaves; and they did all that Shahzamān had told of them and passed the time in these diversions until asr, the beginning of the sun's decline.

When King Shahryār saw these things, reason fled from her seat in his mind, and he said to his brother Shahzamān: "Let us go hence and fare forth to seek our destiny upon the road of Allāh; for we have no right in royalty, nor shall have, until we have found someone who has met a fate like ours: without that, in truth, death would be better than our lives." To this his brother made the fitting answer and both went out by a secret door of the palace. They travelled night and day until they came to a tree in the middle of a lonely meadow near the salt sea. In this meadow there was an eyelet of fresh water at which they drank and afterwards sat down to rest. An hour had hardly passed when the sea began to be troubled and suddenly a column of black smoke came up out of it which rose to the sky and moved towards the meadow. Seeing this, they became afraid and climbed as high as they were able into the tall tree, and began to consider what this might mean. Then, behold! the smoke column changed to a Jinnī of great size, vast-shouldered, gigantically-breasted, and carrying on his head a box. He put foot to the earth, came towards the tree in which they were, and stopped below it. Then he lifted the lid of the box and took from it a large coffer which he also opened; and thereupon appeared a desirable young girl, bright in her beauty, shining like the sun. As the poet says:

*She comes, a torch in the shadows, and it is day;  
Her light more brightly lights the dawn.  
Suns leap from out her beauty  
And moons are born in the smiling of her eyes.*

TALE OF KING SHAHRYĀR AND KING SHAHZAMĀN

*Ah, that the veils of her mystery might be rent  
And the folk of the world lie ravished at her feet.  
Forced by the great light of her sweet glancing  
Wet tears smart forth from every watching eye.*

When the Jinnī had looked long at the beauty of the girl, he said to her: "O Queen of every silky thing! O you whom I ravished away upon your bridal night! I would sleep a little." And the Jinnī, resting his head upon the knees of the young girl, went to sleep.

Then the child raised her head and saw the two kings hidden in the tree-top. At once she lifted the head of the Jinnī from her knees, rested it upon the ground, and stood up beneath the tree, saying to them by signs: "Come down. Have no fear of this Ifrīt." They also answered by signs: "Allāh be with you! Pray excuse us from such a dangerous undertaking!" She said: "I conjure you by Allāh! Come down quickly, or I will warn the Ifrīt and he shall kill you with the worst of deaths!" Then they were afraid and came down beside her; and she said at once: "Come, pierce me violently with your lances; if not, I will wake the Ifrīt." Then Shahryār said fearfully to Shahzamān: "You, my brother, do first what she requires!" To which the other answered: "I will do nothing until you have given me an example, my elder brother!" And each began to coax the other, making with their eyes gestures of coupling. Then she said: "Why do I see you working your eyes in this way? If you do not come forward and do it to me at once, I will wake the Ifrīt." So, in their fear of the Jinnī, they both did to her as she had commanded, and when they were well wearied, she said: "You are indeed experienced riders!" Then, drawing from her pocket a little bag, she took from it a necklace of five hundred and seventy seal-rings, saying: "Know you what these are?" And they answered: "We do not know." Then she said: "The givers of these seal-rings have all coupled with me on the unwitting horns of this Ifrīt. So now, O

brothers, give me yours!" Then they gave her their seal-rings, taking them off their hands. Whereon she said: "Know that this Ifrit carried me off on the night of my marriage, prisoned me in a coffer and placed that coffer in a box and fastened about the box seven chains, yes, and then laid me at the bottom of the moaning sea that wars and dashes with its waves. But he did not know that whenever any one of us women desires a thing, nothing can prevent her from it. And the poet said, besides:

*Friend, trust not at all in women, smile at their promising,  
For they lower or they love at the caprice of their parts.  
Filled to the mouth with deceit, they lavish a lying love  
Even while the very floss fringing their silks is faithless.  
Respect and remember the words of Yūsuf. Forget not  
Iblīs worked all Adam's woe with one woman.  
Rail not, my friend. At this house, at whom you are railing,  
Mild love to-morrow will give place to madness.  
Say not: "If I love, I'll escape the follies of loving",  
But rather: "Only a miracle brings a man safe from among them."*

At these words the brothers marvelled even to the limits of marvelling and said to each other: "If this be a Jinnī and in spite of his power much more terrible things have happened to him than to us, it is an adventure which ought to console us!"

So at the same hour they left the young woman and returned each to his own city.

When King Shahryār entered his palace, he caused his wife's head to be cut off at the neck, and in the same way the heads of the slaves, both men and women. Then he ordered his wazīr to bring him every night a young and virgin girl, whom he ravished and, when the night had passed, caused to be slain. This he did for three long years; so that the people were all one cry of grief, one tumult of horror. They fled away with such daughters as remained to them;

and in all the city there remained not one girl who retained the state to serve for this assault.

At last the King, as was his custom, ordered the wazīr to bring him a young girl; and the wazīr went forth and hunted, but found no girl at all. So he returned to his own home, dejected and wretched, and with his soul full of his fear of the King.

Now this wazīr had himself two daughters who in the matters of beauty, charm, brilliance, perfection, and delicate taste, were each unrivalled save by the other. The name of the elder was Shahrazād, and that of the younger Dunyazād. Shahrazād had read the books, the annals, and the legends of old kings, together with the histories of past peoples. Also she was credited with possessing a thousand books of stories telling of the peoples, the kings, and the poets of bygone ages and of past time. She was sweetly eloquent of speech and to listen to her was music.

When she had looked at her father, she said: "Why do I see you so bowed and changed with care and sorrow? Know, my father, that the poet says: 'Thou who art sad, oh be comforted; for nothing endures and as every joy vanishes away so also vanishes every sorrow!'"

When the wazīr heard these words, he told his daughter from beginning to end all that had happened concerning the King. Then Shahrazād said: "By Allāh, father, you must marry me to this king; for either I shall live or, dying, I shall be a ransom for the daughters of the Mussulmāns and the cause of their deliverance out of the hands of the King." Then said he: "Allāh be with you! You shall never expose yourself to such a danger." And she answered: "It is necessary that I do this."

So the wazīr, without insisting further, had the wedding garments of his daughter Shahrazād made ready, and then went to tell the matter to King Shahryār.

Meanwhile, Shahrazād gave these instructions to her young sister: "When I am with the King I will send to fetch you; then

when you have come and when you see the King finish his act with me, you must say: 'Tell me, my sister, some of your stories of marvel that the night may pass pleasantly.' Then will I tell you tales which, if Allāh wills, shall be the deliverance of the daughters of the Mussulmāns."

After this the wazīr, her father, came to take her and went up with her into the presence of the King. And the King, being overborne with happiness, said to him: "Is the needful thing indeed present?" And respectfully the wazīr answered: "Yes!"

But when the King wished to take the young girl, she began to weep, so that he asked: "What ails you?" She answered: "O my King, I have a little sister and I would say my farewells to her." So the King sent for the little sister, who came and threw herself upon the neck of Shahrazād, and lastly cowered down beside the bed.

Then the King rose and, taking the maiden Shahrazād, ravished her virginity.

Afterwards they spoke together and Dunyazād said to Shahrazād: "Allāh be with you! Tell us, my sister, some of your tales of marvel, that the night may pass pleasantly." And Shahrazād answered: "Gladly and as a duty, if the great and courteous King permits." When the King heard these words, and being moreover unable to sleep, he was in no way averse to listening to the tale of Shahrazād.

## THE TALE OF SWEET-FRIEND AND ALĪ-NŪR.

*Then Shabrazād said:*

IT is related, O auspicious King, that there was once, on the throne of Basrah, a sultān, tributary to the Khalīfah Hārūn al-Rashīd, whose name was Muhammad ibn Sulaimān al-Zainī. He loved the poor and lowly, raised the fallen, and parted with his gold to all Believers in the Prophet, on whom be the prayer and peace of Allāh. He was in every way worthy of that ode which a poet wrote in his honour. It begins:

*His ink was blood and his good lance at rest  
A ready pen  
For fair calligraphy;  
It wrote red songs in praise of victory  
Upon the white papyrus of the breast  
Of other men.*

This king had two wazīrs, the one al-Mūīn son of Sāwi, and the other al-Fadl son of Kakhkān. Now, you must know that al-Fadl ibn Kakhkān was the most generous man of all his time, admirable in virtue and manner, urbane in character, loved by all and esteemed by all for his wisdom and knowledge. Men came to him in their difficulties; in all the kingdoms there was no one who did not pray long life and prosperity for him, knowing him to be above evil and beyond injustice. The second wazīr, the son of Sāwi, was the exact opposite of this good man in every way. He hated men and abominated goodness, his daily practice was evil. A certain poet has said of him:

*I rose and walked away when he was nigh,  
I lifted up my robe as he went by;  
I leapt upon my horse and rode all day  
To find some place beneath a cleaner sky.*

The difference between these two wazīrs has been well summed up by another poet, who said:

*Scan Noble's lineage and you will find  
Age after age a Noble of that kind:  
Vile's line is just as long, for, all the while,  
Vile's father's father's father's name was Vile.*

It is to be remembered that men hated the wazīr al-Mūīn just as deeply as they loved the wazīr al-Fadl, also that al-Mūīn, while pretending a great friendship for al-Fadl, lost no opportunity of prejudicing him in the eyes of the King.

One day Muhammad ibn Sulaimān heard that there was newly arrived in Basrah a fresh batch of young slaves from all countries, so, sitting on his throne among his amīrs and the chief nobles of his court, he said to his wazīr al-Fadl: "I wish you to find me a young slave without equal in the whole world. She must have perfect beauty, superior attributes, and an admirably sweet character."

Wishing to cross the King because of this sign of confidence shown to his rival, the wazīr Sāwi cried: "But, even supposing such a woman could be found, she would cost ten thousand golden dīnārs." The King, made all the more eager by this obstacle, immediately caused his treasurer to deliver ten thousand golden pieces at the palace of al-Fadl and ordered the favoured wazīr to execute his commission at once.

Al-Fadl lost no time in going to the slave-market, but he could find no woman fulfilling the conditions of the King. He called together all the brokers concerned in the selling of black and white slaves, and bade them search for what he required, commanding that any woman offered for over a thousand dīnārs should be shown to him before a sale was made. After this not a day passed without two or three brokers bringing some chosen slave to the wazīr, so that by the end of a month more than a thousand girls had passed

before his eyes (a troop able to bring back fire to the limbs of a thousand ancients) without his having been able to decide on one.

One morning, as al-Fadl had mounted his horse and was about to ride to the palace to beg an extension of time, a certain broker of his acquaintance ran up and, holding his stirrup, honourably greeted him with these lines:

*O grand wazīr  
Whose hand holds up the glory of this reign  
Making the old times come again,*

*O grand wazīr  
Whose sword was never turned aside,*

*Whose breath brings back the life when life has died,*

*O grand wazīr  
Whose every action God approves,  
Whose every thought His Prophet loves,  
O grand wazīr!*

Concluding these verses, the broker said: "Noble al-Fadl, great son of Kahkān, I come to announce that such a slave as you have honoured me by requiring has been found and is ready for you." "Bring her quickly to my palace that I may see her", said the wazīr, dismounting from his horse and returning to his apartments. An hour later the broker returned, holding a young girl by the hand. She was tall and slim, with marvellous outpointing breasts, brown lids over night-coloured eyes, smooth full cheeks, a laughing chin just shaded with a dimple, hips in firm curves, a bee's waist, and a heavy swelling croup. She stood before him dressed in rare stuffs. Her mouth was a flower, the wet of it sweeter than sherbet; her lips were redder than flowering nutmeg, and all her body wavered like the tender shoot of a willow. Her voice had more music than



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the song of a light wind, sweeter than a light wind which has passed over gardens of flowers. A poet has sung this of her:

*Her body is silk like water,  
With the curves of water,  
Pure and restful as water.*

*To be with her in the night!  
Her hair, the wings of night,  
And her hands the pale stars of night.*

*God said: Let there be eyes,  
And lo! the dew of her eyes,  
The dark wine of her eyes.*

This girl, ripe and young like a flower, was called Anis al-Jalis, Sweet-Friend.

When the wazir saw her, he marvelled and asked the broker her price. "Her owner asked me ten thousand dinārs", answered the other, "and I agreed to that price because I thought it not excessive. He claims that he will lose on the transaction for various reasons which I would prefer you to hear from his own lips." "Bring him to me at once", said the wazir.

The broker fetched the owner of the slave with all speed, and the wazir saw that he was an old and very feeble Persian. Such was the poet when he wrote:

*Time has undone  
My body's quickness  
Ruthlessly;  
Once I was straight and walked towards the sun,  
But now I keep the house with my friend, Sickness,  
And my last mistress, Immobility.*

The old man wished the wazīr peace, and the other said: "It is agreed, then, that you sell me this slave for ten thousand golden dīnārs? She is not for me, but for the King." "As she is for the King", answered the old man, "I would willingly offer her for nothing; but, since you insist, most generous of wazīrs, I will accept ten thousand dīnārs. At the same time, I must tell you that sum would hardly pay for the white chicken-meat she has eaten, much less for her clothes and her education. She has had numberless masters; she has learnt the most excellent calligraphy, together with both Arabic and Persian grammar and syntax; she knows the commentaries of the Book, moral law, jurisprudence, philosophy and ethics, geometry, medicine, cadastral survey, and the like; but her chief excellence is in poetry, music of all kinds, singing and dancing. She has read all the books of the poets and the historians, but her knowledge is only the sweetening to a noble character and great good humour. That is why I have named her Sweet-Friend."

"I do not doubt that you are right", said the wazīr, "but I can only pay you ten thousand dīnārs. I pray you, therefore, count the sum." Al-Fadl paid the old Persian his money, but before he left the slave merchant said: "If I may give you a word of advice, I would suggest that you do not take Sweet-Friend at once to our sovereign Muhammad ibn Sulaimān, for only to-day she has finished a long journey and is a little worn by the change of climate and of water. It would be better both for you and her if you were to keep her ten days in your own palace where, resting and bathing and changing her garments, she can recover the fine flower of her beauty. Then you can present her to the Sūltan, and he will honour you all the more for your precaution." The old man's advice seemed good to al-Fadl, so he received Sweet-Friend in his own home and prepared a private room where she might rest.

Now the wazīr al-Fadl ibn Kahkān had a son so handsome that people beholding him thought that the moon was rising. His skin was marvellously white, but roses blushed below the silky down of

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his cheeks, and on one of them lay a beauty spot like a sprinkle of ambergris. He was like the boy in the song:

*Roses sweeter than red dates and grapes,  
But my hand falters  
In putting forth to touch his cheek  
And my eyes close sleepily  
After their feasting.*

*If his heart were as tender  
As the peeled wand of his body  
He would not so coldly have sinned against me.*

*You cannot accuse me, for I am mad,  
Nor my darling, for he is more than royal.  
Arrest my heart,  
But you will find no room for punishment,  
No room for chains.*

This young man, whose name was Ali-Nūr, knew nothing of the purchase of Sweet-Friend. But the wazīr his father had most strictly recommended this precept to the girl: "Know, dear child, that I have bought you for our master, Muhammad ibn Sulaimān; therefore guard yourself well and avoid any occasion on which you, and consequently I, might be compromised. I have a son who is a very handsome fellow but somewhat of a rascal; there is not a girl in all the quarter who has not freely given herself to him, whose flower he has not plucked. Avoid any meeting with him, let him not hear your voice or see your face; otherwise you will be lost." "I hear and I obey", answered Sweet-Friend, and the wazīr left her to go about his business.

Allāh had written that things should turn out very differently from the intentions of the good wazīr. A few days later Sweet-

Friend went to her bath in the wazīr's palace, and all the little slaves set themselves to give her such a bath as they had never achieved in their lives before. After washing her hair and all her limbs, they rubbed and kneaded her, depilated her carefully with paste of caramel, sprinkled her hair with a sweet wash prepared from musk, tinted her finger-nails and her toe-nails with henna, burnt male incense and ambergris at her feet, and rubbed light perfumes into all her skin. Then they threw a large towel, scented with orange-flowers and roses, over her body and, wrapping all her hair in a warm cloth, led her to her own apartment, where the wazīr's wife waited to wish her the customary wishes of the bath. Sweet-Friend advanced on seeing Alī-Nūr's mother and kissed her hand. The wazīr's wife embraced her on both cheeks, saying: "Health and delight to you from this bath, Sweet-Friend! How fair and bright and scented you are, my child! You light our house, and we have no need of torches." Sweet-Friend, moved by this kind speech, lifted her hand to her heart, her lips and her brow, and answered with an inclination of the head: "Mistress and mother, I thank you heartily. May Allāh give you all joy on earth and in Paradise! My bath was delicious and I only wish you could have shared it with me." Alī-Nūr's mother had sherbets and pastries brought for Sweet-Friend, and wished her health and a good digestion.

The old lady herself wished to take a bath, but, before leaving for this purpose, she commanded two of the little slaves to guard the door of Sweet-Friend's apartment, and to allow no one in on any pretext whatever, since, as she said, Sweet-Friend was quite naked and might catch cold. The little ones answered: "We hear and we obey!" and the wazīr's wife went with all her women to the bath, after kissing Sweet-Friend a last time and being wished by her a pleasant visit to the hammām.

Hardly had she left when young Alī-Nūr entered the house and sought his mother that he might kiss her hand as was his daily custom. He hunted through the rooms until he came at last to the

one reserved for Sweet-Friend. Astonished to find the door guarded by the two little slaves, who smiled at him because they secretly loved him, he asked if his mother was within. They answered, trying to push him back with their little hands: "Oh no, oh no, our mistress is not here, she is not here! She is at the hammām, at the hammām. She is at the hammām, Alī-Nūr." "Then what are you doing here, my lambs? Come away from the door that I may go in and rest", said Alī-Nūr. But the little ones answered: "You cannot come in, Alī-Nūr, you cannot come in! Our young mistress, Sweet-Friend, is inside." "What Sweet-Friend is that?" asked Alī Nūr. They answered: "It is the lovely Sweet-Friend whom your father, our master, the wazīr al-Fadl, bought with ten thousand dīnārs for the Sultān al-Zainī. She has just come from the bath and is quite naked. She only has on a big towel. You cannot come in, you cannot come in, Alī-Nūr. She will take cold and our mistress will beat us. You cannot come in, Alī-Nūr!"

All this time Sweet-Friend, who had heard what was being said outside her room, was thinking: "This must be young Alī-Nūr, whose exploits his father told me. Can it really be that handsome youth who has not left one girl a virgin or one woman unloved in all the quarter? By my life, I would like to see him!" Unable to contain herself, she rose to her feet, all scented from the bath, her happy body bare to the joy of life, and, slightly opening the door, looked out. She saw Alī-Nūr as if the stars were just beyond her door; from that one look she reaped a thousand joys and sorrows. And Alī-Nūr also took one glance through that little space, and the sight remained with him for ever.

Alī-Nūr, carried away by passion, shouted at and pushed the two little slaves so violently that they fled weeping away. They stopped, however, in the adjoining room and, looking from far off through the door which the young man had forgotten to shut, saw all that passed between him and Sweet-Friend.

Alī-Nūr entered and found Sweet-Friend trembling and submis-

sive upon the couch, stretched out naked with wide eyes; he bowed to her with his hand on his heart, saying tenderly: "Sweet-Friend, was it you whom my father bought for ten thousand dīnārs of gold? Did they then weigh you in the other scale? Sweet-Friend, you are more beautiful than molten gold, your hair falls fuller than the mane of a desert lion, your naked breast is sweeter and cooler than the foam of streams." "Alī-Nūr", she answered, "to my frightened eyes you are more terrible than the desert lion, to my desirous body you are stronger than a leopard, to my pale lips you are more deadly than a tempered sword. Alī-Nūr, you are my king. You shall take me. Come, oh come!"

Alī-Nūr threw himself on the couch by Sweet-Friend's side, drunken for very joy, and they gripped each other. The little slaves were astonished, for what they saw was strange to them and they did not understand it. After kisses given and taken, Alī-Nūr slipped towards the foot of the couch and, bending Sweet-Friend's legs about his waist, plunged into her. Sweet-Friend wound her arms about him until they were one body, and, as they lay there sucking each other's tongues, nothing was to be heard for a long time but kisses, or seen save many movements. In their terror the little slaves fled weeping to the hammām, from which Alī-Nūr's mother was just emerging, all sweaty with her bath. "Why do you weep and run, my little ones?" she asked. "O mistress, O mistress!" they stammered. "What harm has fallen, little wretches?" she asked sharply. Then, crying all the more, they said: "O mistress, our young master Alī-Nūr beat us and chased us away. Then he went in to Sweet-Friend, our mistress, and they sucked each other's tongues. What he did afterwards we do not know, for he was on top of her and she was sighing. We are very frightened." Although the wife of the wazīr was an old woman and wore at the time high wooden bath-clogs, she ran as hard as she could when she heard what had happened, and came to Sweet-Friend's room with all her women just as Alī-Nūr, having ravished the young girl, had slipped away.

The wazīr's wife, all yellow in the face, went up to Sweet-Friend and asked her what had happened. The girl answered in terms which that rascal Ali-Nūr had prepared for her: "Mistress, as I was resting on the couch after my bath, a young man came in whom I had never seen before. He was very handsome, my mistress, and about the eyes and lashes he much resembled you. He said: 'You are that Sweet-Friend whom my father bought for me with ten thousand dinārs.' 'I am Sweet-Friend', I answered, 'and was indeed bought with ten thousand dinārs, but it was for our King, Muhammad ibn Sulaimān.' 'Not at all, Sweet-Friend', he answered laughing, 'I know my father meant you for the King at first, but now he has changed his mind and given you to me as a present.' Mistress, I am but a slave whose lot is to obey, and I think I did well. I would rather be Ali-Nūr's slave than the legal queen of all Baghdād." "Alas, alas, my child, what a misfortune!" cried the wazīr's wife. "It is Ali-Nūr, my scapegrace son, who has betrayed you. Tell me what he did." "I gave myself to him", said Sweet-Friend, "he took me and hugged me close." "But did he take you altogether?" asked the old woman. "Indeed he did, and that three times, dear mother", answered Sweet-Friend. Then Ali-Nūr's mother, crying out: "Woe, woe, the rascal has destroyed you utterly!" began to weep and beat her face with her hands. Her women imitated her, for they all now went in deadly fear of the wazīr, who, though ordinarily a mild and generous man, would never tolerate an escapade which called his own and the King's honour in question. He was quite capable, in his anger, of killing Ali-Nūr with his own hand. Therefore his wife and all her women wept as if the youth were dead already, and lo! as they did so the wazīr al-Fadl entered the room and asked them the cause of their sorrow.

His wife wiped her eyes and blew her nose, saying: "Father of my son, first swear by the Prophet (on whom be the prayer and peace of Allāh) that you will deal with this thing exactly as I tell you, otherwise I would rather die than speak." The wazīr swore, and

then his wife told him of Alī-Nūr's pretended trick and of the irrevocable harm which had come to Sweet-Friend's virginity.

His father and mother had put up with a multitude of Alī-Nūr's riots, but at this last one al-Fadl was stricken down. He tore his clothes, hit himself in the face, bit his hands, pulled out his beard and threw his turban far from him. Wishing to console him, his wife said: "Do not distress yourself. I will pay you back the ten thousand dinārs out of my own money, for I have lately sold some jewels." "What are you saying, woman?" cried al-Fadl. "Do you think that I weep for the money? It is for the loss of my honour that I weep, and for the death which will surely come upon me." "But, my dear, nothing is lost", said his wife. "The King does not know of the existence of Sweet-Friend, therefore the loss of her virginity can mean nothing to him. I will give you ten thousand dinārs and you can buy another beautiful slave for the King. Then we can keep Sweet-Friend for Alī-Nūr, who already loves her and recognises the treasure we have found in her." "But, mother of my son", objected the wazīr, "have you forgotten that there is an enemy always lying in wait for us, Sāwi, the second wazīr, who will one day hear this tale? And, when he does, he will go to the Sultān and say. . . ."

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

IT is related, O auspicious King, that the wazīr al-Fadl told his wife that their enemy, the wazīr Sāwi, would go to the Sultān and say: "O King, you gave that wazīr, whom you always claimed to be so faithful to you, ten thousand dinārs, with which to buy you a slave. He bought you one without her equal in the whole world and, finding her beauty beyond parallel, said to that corrupt youth, his son: "Take her, my



boy, you are more worthy of her than the old King who has a hundred concubines and cannot manage the virginity of one.' Then that Ali-Nūr, whose special trick is the destruction of maiden-heads, laid hold of the slave and slit her through and through. He still enjoys her now among the women of his father's house, the good-for-nothing stallion."

"When my enemy Sāwi says this", continued al-Fadl, "the Sultān, who believes in me, will tell him that he lies. Then Sāwi will ask leave to come down upon my house with a troop and bring Sweet-Friend to the King. The Sultān will give leave, and, when he questions Sweet-Friend, she will not be able to deny the fact. Sāwi will say in triumph: 'Master, you see that I am a good counsellor, and yet that traitor al-Fadl is ever preferred before me.' The heart of the Sultān will be changed, and I shall be punished and made a laughing-stock before all who love and reverence me. Also I will lose my life."

"My dear", answered his wife, "tell no one what has happened and no one will know. Trust in Allāh, for only what He wishes can come to pass." The wazīr became calmer at his wife's words and began to feel more confident about the future, but his anger towards Ali-Nūr remained.

Ali-Nūr himself, when he had slipped from Sweet-Friend's room on hearing the cries of the little slaves, wandered about all day and, returning only late at night, hid himself from his father's anger with his mother in the women's apartments. She pardoned him with a kiss and secreted him carefully, helped by her women, who were all a little jealous that Sweet-Friend should have had so mighty a stag within her arms. With their assistance Ali-Nūr kept from his father's sight for a whole month, slipping into his mother's room late at night to find Sweet-Friend.

One day Ali-Nūr's mother, seeing her husband less sad than usual, said to him: "How long is your anger going to last against our son? We have lost a slave, do we wish to lose our boy also?"

If this goes on he will leave us altogether and we shall bitterly mourn the only child of our bodies." "But what is to be done?" asked the wazīr. "Stay with me to-night", answered his wife, "and, when Alī-Nūr comes in, I will make peace between you. At first you can pretend to chastise him, even to kill him; then, softening by degrees, you can marry him to Sweet-Friend. She is in every way admirable, and they love each other. I myself, as I have said, will give you the money which you have paid for her."

The wazīr, falling in with his wife's plan, leapt upon Alī-Nūr that night as soon as he came to his mother's apartment and, throwing him on his back, brandished a knife above him. "What would you do?" cried the mother, throwing herself between them. "I will kill him!" cried the wazīr. "But he repents!" wept his wife, and Alī-Nūr said: "Father, would you kill your son?" "Unhappy boy", answered the wazīr, weeping, "how could you bring yourself so to jeopardise my honour and my life?" "Listen, father", said Alī-Nūr, "to these words of the poet:

*Ah, kill me not!  
The more my sins,  
The greater is your pardoning.  
In my heart's plot  
The spider spins,  
Weeds grow, the ground is hardening;  
A barren lot,  
Until begins  
My clement father's gardening."*

The wazīr, hearing these lines, allowed his son to rise to his knees; compassion entered his heart and he pardoned him. Alī-Nūr rose and, kissing his father's hands, stood submissively before him. "My son", asked al-Fadl, "why did you not tell me that you truly loved Sweet-Friend and that it was not a passing fancy? If I had known that you were ready to deal faithfully by her, I would have

given her to you.” “I am ready to deal very faithfully by her”, answered Ali-Nūr. “Then, my dear child”, said the wazīr, “I have only one recommendation to make to you, which I charge you never to forget, if you would not forfeit my blessing. Promise me that you will never take other wife than Sweet-Friend, that you will never ill-treat her, and never sell her.” “All this I swear”, said Ali-Nūr solemnly, “on the life of our Prophet and upon the Sacred Book.”

All the house was filled with joy at this agreement, and Ali-Nūr became freely possessed of Sweet-Friend. He lived with her in perfect accord for a whole year and, during that time, Allāh took from the King all memory of having given ten thousand dīnārs to al-Fadl for the purchase of a slave. The wicked wazīr Sāwi soon came to hear of the matter, but he dared say nothing to the King because of the high opinion in which his rival was held both by the Sultān and by all the people of Basrah.

It happened that one day the wazīr al-Fadl, hastening away from the hammām before his sweat was dry, took cold from a change in the weather and had to keep his bed. He speedily grew worse, being unable to sleep night or day, and at last a consumption gripped him so that he became but a shadow of his former self. He dared no longer put off the last duties of his life; he sent for his son and, when he came weeping, said to him: “My child, joy has an end, good has a limit; each bill falls due, each draught has bitter dregs. To-day I drink the sharp cup of eternity.” Then he murmured these lines:

*Once he will miss, twice he will miss,  
He only chooses one of many hours;  
For him nor deep nor hill there is,  
But all's one level plain he hunts for flowers.*

“Now, my son”, he went on, “I can but tell you to put your trust in Allāh, to keep your eyes fixed on the end of man, and to take care of Sweet-Friend.” “Father, O father, you are leaving us”, cried

Alī-Nūr, "and who will be left like you in all the earth? None knows your name save to bless it, the preachers in the mosque on Friday speak of you in their discourses and pray for you." "My child, I hope that Allāh will receive me and will not cast me out", said al-Fadl. Then he pronounced the two acts of faith in a firm voice: "I witness that there is no God but Allāh! I witness that Muhammad is His Prophet!" and, rendering his last sigh, became for ever written among the blessed.

The palace was filled with grief, news was borne to the King, and all the city of Basrah learnt of the death of the wazīr al-Fadl, son of Kahkān. Then the people, and even the little children in the schools, wept for him. Alī-Nūr spared neither trouble nor expense to make the funeral worthy of his father's memory. In the procession walked all the amīrs, wazīrs and grandees of the kingdom; the people followed after, and the wicked Sāwi was obliged to be one of the eight who carried the coffin. When the house of death was left behind, the principal sheikh who was solemnising the burial said these, among many other stanzas, in honour of the dead:

*I said to the obsequious ministers of death:  
 You waste your breath  
 In wailing him whom many mournful angels weep  
 In heaven's deep.  
 Spread if you must the lustral water on his thighs,  
 From glory's eyes  
 Purer aspersion sprinkles. If your fingers must  
 Preserve his dust  
 With dark sweet gums, forget not the far sweeter balms  
 Of his rich alms.  
 Fear not but that the shoulders of the mourners can hold well  
 The shallow shell  
 Of him whose kindly mercies every head bowed down  
 In all the town.*

For long after his father's death Ali-Nūr shut himself in with his grief and refused to see anyone, but one day, as he sat sadly thinking of his father, a knock came at the door and a young man of his own age, the son of one of his father's friends, craved his admittance. When Ali-Nūr had let him in, he kissed the mourner's hand, saying: "My friend, no man dies. He lives again in his posterity. One must not grieve for ever; your father lives again in you. The master of us all, Muhammad, the Prophet of Allāh, upon whom be prayer and peace, said: 'Lift up your hearts and cease to mourn.' "

Ali-Nūr did not know well what to answer. Yet he determined to renounce his grief; he had his guest-hall filled with all that was necessary for the reception of his friends and, from that time, kept open house for old and young. More especially he cultivated the companionship of ten young men, sons of the chief merchants of Basrah, and with them passed all his days in joy and feasting. He gave presents to every man and no stranger was introduced to him without having a feast given in his honour. So prodigally did he live, in spite of the sage warnings of Sweet-Friend, that one day his steward came to him, saying: "My master, do you not know that too much generosity destroys the giver, that too many presents waste the house, and that he who gives without account deals penury to himself? The poet was right when he said:

*My silver board  
Is all my sword,  
Then shall I give my enemy my sword?  
My gold's a spear  
And those I fear  
Would gladly plunge it in my back, I fear.  
I will keep my golden spear,  
I will keep my silver sword,  
So shall my foes be friends and hear  
My lightest whispered word,*

TALE OF SWEET-FRIEND AND ALĪ-NŪR

*And run to me and sweetly swear  
I am their lord,  
Fanning below my golden spear,  
Kissing my silver sword."*

Alī-Nūr looked curiously at his steward when he said these lines, and answered: "Your words cannot touch me. I have but one thing to say to you, I say it once and for all: as long as you find I have enough to buy me breakfast, take no thought for my dinner. I also know the poets. One of them said:

*If I were cleared of all my minted joys,  
My golden jolly-boys,  
I would not take it ill.  
I would forget my old expensive sweets,  
My gaily coloured treats,  
By sitting still.*

*There's no excess in a poor lad  
Who stays content, when things are bad,  
After the ripe expense of all he had;  
And such am I, Sir.  
For whatsoever fate befall  
I'd rather die a prodigal,  
One who had lived beyond them all,  
Than be a miser."*

After this there was nothing left for the steward to do but to bow respectfully to his master and retire.

From that day forth Alī-Nūr put no bounds to his generosity and to a certain natural kindness which made him give all he had to friends and strangers. A guest had but to say: "How beautiful that is!" for him to answer: "It is yours!" A friend had but to remark:

“My lord, what a delightful house you have in such and such a place!” for Alī-Nūr to take pen and paper and, after he had written and sealed a deed of gift, hand it to the friend, saying: “Now it belongs to you.” He behaved in this way for a whole year, giving a daily feast at morning and at night to all his friends; and at these the most reputed singers and dancers were always in attendance.

Sweet-Friend was not listened to in those days and was even a little neglected, but, instead of complaining, she consoled herself with her poetry and other books. One day, when Alī-Nūr was with her in her own apartment, she said: “O Nūr, light of my eyes, listen to this poem:

*Surely it is a pleasant thing  
To fill the mouths of friends with golden gifts.  
(Only beware the shifts  
Of fortune's wing.)*

*The drowsy nights are sent to steep  
The over-laboured senses of the day.  
(But of what use are they,  
If she'll not sleep?)”*

As she was saying these lines, there came a knock on the door. Alī-Nūr went to it and, finding the steward, led him to a little room next to the guest-hall, where many of his friends were feasting at the time. When they were alone together, Alī-Nūr asked the other why he had so long a face, and the steward answered: “Master, that which I feared has come to pass; my occupation has gone, since there is nothing left for me to look after. Of each and every thing you had, not a penny remains. Here are my accounts; the two books balance exactly.” On this Alī-Nūr bowed his head, saying: “There is no power or might save in Allāh.”

Now one of his friends in the hall had heard all this, and im-

mediately told the others that Alī-Nūr was penniless; also the face of their host, when he returned to his guests, confirmed the news.

So one of them rose and said to Alī-Nūr: "My lord, may I have leave to retire? My wife is lying in to-night, and I must not stay any longer away from her." Alī-Nūr gave him leave to depart, and soon a second rose, saying: "My brother celebrates the circumcision of his little boy to-day; I must really be present at the ceremony." Thus, one by one, all the guests made excuse and left Alī-Nūr alone in the middle of his hall. Calling Sweet-Friend, he said: "My dear, you do not know the misfortune that has happened to me." With that he told her of his ruin, and she said: "Dear Alī-Nūr, for a long time I have feared that this would happen. You would never listen to me. One day, even, you answered my remonstrances with these lines:

*If painted Fortune pass your door,  
Seize her and bear her in and tumble her;  
She has the soul of any whore,  
Do what you will you cannot humble her;  
Throw all your gold about and she will stay,  
Try to economise and she's away.*

Not wishing for any more answers like this, I have since kept silence."

"Sweet-Friend", said Alī-Nūr, "you know that I have spent all my goods on my friends, stinting them nothing. Now you will find that they will not abandon me in my misfortune." "By Allāh, but I am sure they will!" answered Sweet-Friend. "We shall see", said Alī-Nūr, "I will go this minute and obtain some money from each of them. Then I can set up in business and leave all this pleasuring for ever." So he went out and soon came to that street, the most beautiful in all Basrah, in which his ten friends lived. Knocking at the first door and being asked his name by a negress, he answered: "Tell your master that Alī-Nūr is at the door, ready to kiss his hand



and beg his generosity.” The negress reported this to her master and, being told to say he was from home, returned to Ali-Nūr with that message. “The bastard hides from me”, thought the young man, “but the others will not treat me so scurvily.” Yet, at the second door he tried, he received the same answer and could not help murmuring these lines:

*No sooner had I come to visit these,  
Than all the house, wife, husband, son and daughter,  
Ran out behind and hid among the trees  
For fear I'd ask them for a cup of water.*

“Surely one of them will help me, though the others are so niggard”, said Ali-Nūr, but he found not one of the ten who would give him so much as a crust of bread. So, intoning these lines:

*Man is a tree of golden oranges  
Which all his friends delight to cluster under,  
But, as the fruit falls to them by degrees,  
Their slight's like lightning and their scorn is thunder;  
Nor can I call this a disease in nature  
Since it applies to every living creature,*

he returned downcast to Sweet-Friend and told her what had befallen. “Did I not say it would be so, my master?” she answered. “My advice to you now is to sell all the furniture and costly ornaments which we have in the house. We could live on them for a long time.” Ali-Nūr did as she suggested, but soon there was nothing left in the house for him to sell. When they were again penniless, Sweet-Friend threw her arms about the neck of Ali-Nūr who was weeping, and said: “Master, why do you weep? There still remains that same Sweet-Friend whom you called the fairest of all Arab women. Take me down to the market and sell me. You cannot

have forgotten that your father paid ten thousand dinārs for me. If God is good to us, I may fetch even more now. As for our separation, if Allāh wills that we come together again, we shall come together." "Sweet-Friend", answered Alī-Nūr, "I could not abide to lose you even for an hour." "I do not wish it either, dear", she said, "but necessity is a very powerful law. A poet has said:

*Know that the attempted thing is worth  
Your soul's full stretch, what e'er it be;  
For though you own no king on earth,  
Remains our lord, Necessity."*

Alī-Nūr here took Sweet-Friend in his arms and kissed her hair and the tears on her cheeks, reciting this song:

*One look from your dark eyes  
Viaticum supplies,  
I take from my last kiss  
Wine for all drynesses,  
And from one smile  
Food for a hundred mile.*

Sweet-Friend then spoke with such gentle persuasion to Alī-Nūr that she won him to her plan, showing him that there was only one way by which he, the son of al-Fadl ibn Kakhān, might escape shameful poverty. Therefore he took her down to the slave-market and said to the cleverest broker there: "I would have you know the value of her you are going to sell. I do not wish there to be any mistake about it." "O Alī-Nūr, my master, I am your servant and will do the best by you that I am able", answered the broker, leading them both into a room in a nearby khān. Here Sweet-Friend lifted the veil from her face, and the broker cried: "By Allāh, this is the slave Sweet-Friend whom I myself sold to the late wazīr two years

ago for ten thousand dīnārs!” “It is the same”, answered Alī-Nūr. Then said the broker: “My master, each carries round his neck a destiny and may in no wise escape from it, but I swear that I will use all my cunning to sell your slave and get you the highest price in the whole market.”

Immediately the broker ran to the usual meeting place of the merchants, and waited for them there. At that time they were scattered all over the market, but very soon they assembled at the point which the broker had chosen, where Turkish, Greek, Circassian, Georgian and Abyssinian women were collected for sale. When all the buyers were assembled, the broker climbed on to a great stone, crying: “Merchants, rich gentlemen all! Not every round thing is a nut, not every long thing a banana, all is not meat that is red, or fat that is white, all that is rosy is not wine, nor every brown thing dates! O famous traders of Basrah and Baghdād, to-day I put up for your consideration so rare a pearl of price that all your money put together would not equal her worth. See her for yourselves, gentlemen! Now what price shall we say for her?” He let them all take a good look at Sweet-Friend, and the bidding began at four thousand dīnārs. “Four thousand dīnārs I am bid, gentlemen, for this pearl among white slaves!” cried the broker, and immediately a merchant called out: “Four thousand five hundred!”

Just at that moment the wazīr Sāwi passed on horseback through the slave-market and, seeing Alī-Nūr standing by the broker, said to himself: “This wastrel is probably selling the last of his slaves, after having got rid of all his furniture.” Then, hearing the price which was being asked for the white slave, he continued: “He has not a penny, he must be selling that young woman we have heard so much about. If that is so, what joy, what joy is mine!”

Straightway he hailed the broker who, recognising him, ran up and kissed the earth between his hands. “I myself will buy the slave”, said the wazīr. “Bring her quickly to me that I may inspect her.”

The broker, who dared not disobey, brought forward Sweet-Friend and unveiled her before the old man's eyes. Seeing the woman's unparalleled face and form, the wazīr marvelled and asked what price had already been bid. When he was told that the second bid was four thousand five hundred dīnārs, he cried: "I will buy her at that price!" At the same time he looked so fixedly at the other buyers that they dared not raise his price for fear of his notorious vengeance. "Well, broker, why are you standing still?" added the wazīr. "I take the slave for four thousand dīnārs, and you may have the five hundred for your brokerage."

The broker answered not a word but went with hanging head to Alī-Nūr and said to him: "Master, we have not been fortunate! The slave has gone for a ridiculous price. Your father's enemy, the wicked wazīr Sāwi, must have guessed that she is your property. He insists on taking her at the second bidder's price, and none of the merchants dare to bid against him. If he were likely to pay, we might thank Allāh for a small mercy, but this abandoned wazīr is the worst payer in the whole world. I have known all his shifts and evasions for longer than I care to remember. This is what he will do: he will write you a cheque on one of his agents and send word to him not to pay you. Each time you go there the agent will say: 'To-morrow!' but that to-morrow will never come. When you are tired out with his delays, you will let him take the cheque in his hands and he will at once tear it up. Thus you will not get a penny for your slave."

Alī-Nūr was furiously angry at this and asked the broker what could be done. "I have a plan which I think will get you out of your difficulties", answered the broker. "I will walk with Sweet-Friend towards the middle of the market; you must run after us and, snatching her away from me, say to her something of this sort: 'Where are you going, wretched woman? You know that I am only doing as I swore to do, pretending to have you sold at the slave-market to humble you out of your evil behaviour.' Then you

can give her a slap or so, and take her away; the wazīr and everyone else will believe that you simply brought her here in fulfilment of an oath." "That is an excellent plan", agreed Ali-Nūr.

The broker then took the slave by the hand and led her to the wazīr, saying: "My lord, her owner is that young man just behind us. See, he is coming this way." As he spoke, Ali-Nūr approached the group and gave Sweet-Friend a blow with his fist, crying: "Where are you going, wretched woman? You know I am only doing as I swore to do, pretending to have you sold at the slave-market to humble you out of your evil behaviour. Go home and try to be less disobedient in future. Do you think I need the money you would fetch? Even if I were in want, I would rather sell the last thing I have than put you up to auction."

The wazīr Sāwi cried out, on hearing these words of Ali-Nūr: "You young fool, you speak as if you had a least last thing remaining. All of us know that you are penniless." With that he made as if to seize the girl by force, but all the brokers and merchants looked enquiringly at Ali-Nūr, whom they knew and loved for his good father's sake. Ali-Nūr said to them: "I call you all to witness that you have heard this man's insolent words!" But the wazīr said: "Good friends, it is only on your account that I do not kill this knavish fellow with a single blow." The merchants, hearing both sides, consulted each other with their eyes and, deciding to back Ali-Nūr, cried: "This is none of our business. Arrange it as best you can." On this Ali-Nūr, who was naturally both courageous and splenetic, leapt for the wazīr's bridle and threw his enemy to the earth. He knelt on him and rained blows upon his head and belly; then, spitting in his face, he cried: "Dog, son of a dog, bastard! Curses upon your father, and your father's father, and your mother's father! O swine, O filth!" Lastly he gave the wazīr one smashing blow in the mouth which knocked out several teeth, so that his beard was dyed with blood where it was not black with mud.

The ten slaves who were with the wazīr drew their swords and were about to cut Alī-Nūr in pieces when the crowd prevented them, saying: "Do not mix yourselves in this affair! Your master is a wazīr, but his foe is the son of a wazīr. When they are reconciled, it will be bad for you." So the slaves prudently abstained from interfering.

When Alī-Nūr was tired of beating the old man, he took Sweet-Friend by the hand and went up to his own house, followed by the plaudits of the crowd.

The wazīr got to his feet covered, to the great delight of the people, with mud and blood and dust, and made his way to the Sultān's palace. Pausing at the lower end of the hall of King Muhammad ibn Sulaimān, he cried: "Oppression! Oppression!" The Sultān recognised his wazīr and asked who had dared so to maltreat him. Sāwi wept and answered:

*"Shall I be torn by savage bounds  
And you not think  
Or heed?  
Shall I go thirst, while others drink,  
O sacred cloud from off whose bounds  
Falls rain at need?"*

Master, such things are committed against all you love and allow to serve you." "But who has done it?" asked the King. Sāwi answered: "My lord, I went this morning to the slave-market to buy a cook-maid in place of the one who habitually burns my meals, and there I beheld a young slave more beautiful than anything I have seen in my life. I asked a broker who she was and he told me that she belonged to young Alī-Nūr, son of your late wazīr al-Fadl. Perhaps, my lord, you remember giving the son of Kahkān ten thousand dīnārs to buy you some perfection among slaves? It appears that this was the slave he bought. But he found her in

every way admirable and therefore gave her to his son Ali-Nūr, a lad who, since his father's death, has wasted every penny of his inheritance in riotous living, and thus had been forced to put his mistress up for sale. When I found that four thousand dinārs had been bid for her, I thought to buy her myself for my King, who had provided her original price; but, when I bid four thousand dinārs, Ali-Nūr ran up to me, crying: 'Death's-head! Calamitous and unjust old man! I would rather sell her to a Jew or a Christian, even if you filled her veil with solid gold.' 'Young man', I answered, 'I do not buy for myself but for our master, our benefactor, the King.' At that he became more angry still and, throwing me off my horse, began to beat and maltreat me in every way, in spite of my great age and the respect due to my white beard, until I became even as you see me now. It would never have happened if I had not wished to please my King and buy him a slave who was already rightly his, one worthy of his bed."

On finishing his recital the wazīr threw himself at the King's feet and wept for justice. Sweat stood out upon the Sultān's forehead between his eyes; he made a single sign to those who were around him, and on the instant forty armed guards, with great and naked swords, stood before him. The King said to them: "Go to the house of al-Fadl, who was my wazīr, and destroy it utterly. Bind Ali-Nūr and his slave, and drag them here by ropes." The forty guards bowed and set out upon their mission.

Now one of the young chamberlains about the palace, a youth called Sanjar, had been a mamelūk of al-Fadl and brought up with Ali-Nūr, whom he had learnt to love. Chancing to be in the King's presence when Sāwi entered and the Sultān gave his orders, he slipped out and ran through the side-streets until he came to the youth's house. Ali-Nūr, hearing a violent knocking, opened the door himself and would have embraced his friend, but the young man put him aside, saying: "Dear master, this is no time for friendly words and greetings. Hear rather what a poet has said:

TALE OF SWEET-FRIEND AND ALĪ-NŪR

*Pull up the roots of your soul and flee away,  
Torn and in exile she is better  
Than held in fetter  
On her native clay.*

*God spreads the vast of His carpet for your feet  
Woven of rainy hills and valleys,  
Gardens and alleys  
Lilied and complete."*

"What are you telling me, Sanjar?" asked Alī-Nūr, and Sanjar said: "Rise up and flee with your sweet slave. The wazīr Sāwi spreads a net for your feet and, if you fall therein, will kill you. The Sultān has sent forty of his guards with naked swords against you two. Flee at once lest worse befall!" Then, handing a fistful of gold to Alī-Nūr, he continued: "Here are forty dinārs, master; pardon me that it is no more. But you lose time. Escape, in God's name."

Alī-Nūr hastened to warn Sweet-Friend, and, when she had wrapped herself in her veils, the two left the house and came, by Allāh's help, undetected to the sea side. There they found a ship ready to set sail. The captain stood amidships, crying: "If any have good-byes to make, or food to buy, or a forgotten thing to fetch, let him do it now, for we are off!" All the passengers answered that they were ready, and the captain was just crying: "Drop your moorings!" when Alī-Nūr approached and asked him whither he went. "To the home of peace, to Baghdād", answered the captain.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

It is related, O auspicious King, that when the captain answered that he was going to Baghdād, the home of peace, Alī-Nūr and Sweet-Friend went aboard. At once



the ship spread all her sails and left the harbour. A poet has written:

*Behold the ship!  
She races the wind  
And is victorious,  
A bird with white wings  
Lighting and balancing on the sea.*

We will leave Ali-Nūr and Sweet-Friend on board her, wafted by favourable winds, and return to Basrah.

The forty guards invested the whole of Ali-Nūr's house, searching every inch of it for the fugitives. Finding no one, they destroyed the house piecemeal and returned to report to the Sultān, who thereupon gave them orders to search the city. Then he called Sāwi to him and gave him a magnificent robe of honour, saying: "None but I shall avenge you, I swear it." Later, after the wazīr had wished him a long and peaceful life, he ordered criers to go throughout the city and proclaim: "If any light upon Ali-Nūr, son of the dead son of Kahkān, and hale him before the King, he shall receive a fair robe of honour and a thousand dīnārs. If any hide him, his head shall answer for it." But, in spite of these steps, none could find out where Ali-Nūr had gone.

The ship which carried the two lovers arrived safely at Baghdād, and the captain said to them: "This is the famous city of Baghdād, the home of sweetness! She lies beyond the assaults of winter, sleeping in the shade of her roses in an eternal Spring, with flowers and gardens and the murmur of many streams." Ali-Nūr thanked the captain for all his kindness and, giving him five dīnārs for their passages, led Sweet-Friend towards the city.

It was decreed that Ali-Nūr, instead of taking the ordinary road, should chance on that one which leads into the middle of the gardens which surrounded Baghdād. Soon the two stopped at the gate of a garden surrounded by a high wall, outside which all was

well swept and watered and furnished with benches. The shut door was of exceeding beauty, hung about the top with coloured lamps and having a fountain of bright water beside it. The approach to this door lay between two lines of posts which held brocaded flags.

“This is a fair spot”, said Alī-Nūr, and Sweet-Friend answered: “Let us rest on one of these benches for an hour.” So they climbed to the top of one of the high seats, after having washed their faces and hands in the refreshing waters of the fountain. As they sat delighting in the tender breeze, sleep came to them; they covered their faces and slept.

Now the garden at whose door they slept was named the Garden of Delight, and in its midst was a palace called the Palace of Marvels. Both belonged to Hārūn al-Rashīd and, when the Khalifah was sad, it was his wont to come to the garden and the palace to forget his cares. The palace consisted of but one great hall, pierced with forty-five windows, in each of which was hung a brilliant lamp. In the middle of the hall was a great lustre of solid gold. The place was never opened, save on the coming of the Khalifah; on his arrival the lustre and all the lamps were lighted, the windows thrown open and the great couch spread with silk and golden velvet. Seated upon this, the Khalifah would listen to his singers and musicians until the delight of their artistry, the calm of the night, and the cool suavity of the flower-laden breeze would widen his chest again and bring him joy. But more especially did he delight in the voice of his favourite singer, the illustrious Ishāk, whose songs are known over all the world.

The Khalifah had appointed a good old man as guardian of the palace and gardens, one Ibrāhīm, who kept careful watch to prevent indiscreet promenaders, and especially women and children, from entering the garden to spoil or steal the flowers and fruit. That evening he was making his usual slow round of the garden when, chancing to open the great gate, he saw two people asleep on one of the benches, their faces covered with the same covering. In great

indignation he cried: "What, can these audacious people dare thus to flout my lord's commands? They little know that the Khalifah has authorised old Ibrāhīm to punish most severely any who approach this palace. To think that they should make use of a bench reserved for the Sultān's own people!"

With that the old man cut a pliant branch and, going up to the sleepers, made it whistle in the air above their heads. He was about to give them a good thrashing when suddenly he thought: "Ibrāhīm, Ibrāhīm, what are you doing? Would you whip people of whom you know nothing, who may be strangers, or beggars upon the road of Allāh whom He has guided to your presence? First I must see their faces." He lifted their covering and started back in delight at the sight of two faces, fair with sleep, more lovely than all the flowers of his garden. "What shall I do?" he asked himself. "Yes, what shall you do, O blind old Ibrāhīm? You ought to be whipped yourself for your unjust anger."

After a few moments of consideration the old man covered the faces of the sleepers and, sitting on the ground before them, began to massage the feet of Alī-Nūr, for whom he had taken a sudden liking. Alī-Nūr woke up suddenly on feeling his hands and, seeing that he who treated him so bountifully was an old man, withdrew his feet in shame. Then he leapt from the bench and, taking the old man's hand, carried it to his lips and then to his brow. "My son, whence do you two come?" asked Ibrāhīm. Tears started to Alī-Nūr's eyes as he replied: "My lord, we are strangers." "My child", said the old man, "I am not one of those who forget the commands of the Prophet, on whom be the prayer and peace of Allāh. He has written in many places in his Book that we should be hospitable to strangers and receive them with a cordial heart. Come then, my children, and I will show you my garden and my palace, so that you may forget your troubles." "Whose is the garden, my lord?" asked Alī-Nūr, and the sheikh Ibrāhīm, so as not to frighten him and perhaps also from a little vainglory, replied: "The garden

and the palace are mine. I received them as part of an inheritance." The two young people followed him, and he led them into the garden.

Alī-Nūr had seen very splendid gardens in Basrah, but he had never dreamed that there could be one like this. Away from the great door led arches of carved wood, covered with climbing vines from which hung heavy masses of grapes, some red as rubies, others black as ebony. The alley in which they walked was shaded by trees bending under the weight of ripe fruit. In their branches birds piped their airy music; the nightingale drew out her sweet complaint, the turtle-doves sang love songs, the blackbird whistled like a boy, the ringdove murmured as if drunk with wine. Each fruit-tree was represented by the richest of her kinds. There were sweet-almond and bitter-almond apricots, together with apricots of Khurāsān; the fruit of the plum trees fell crimson like the lips of girls; the mirabelles were sweet as sugar; there were red figs, white figs, and green figs all together.

The flowers were pearl and coral; there were roses fairer than the cheeks of a first love; violets looked like sulphur burning in the night; white flowers of the myrtle shone there with stocks and gilliflowers, anemones and lavender. Their heads shone in the dew; the camomile laughed to the narcissus with all her lips; the narcissus looked at the rose with deep dark eyes. Citrons hung down like splendid cups, lemons were lamps of gold. Everywhere lay the coloured carpets of a thousand flowers, for Spring reigned in the garden; nourishing streams moved through the grass like silver snakes, waterfalls tinkled, birds sang to each other and then fell silent waiting for a reply. The South wind murmured like a flute and the West wind answered with a sound of piping.

Thus was the garden as Alī-Nūr and Sweet-Friend saw it with the sheikh Ibrāhīm. Soon the old man, who did not wish to do things by halves, led them into the Palace of Marvels itself.

They stopped on the threshold, their eyes dazzled by the splendour of what they saw, for indeed there was never such a hall in all the

world, such riches or such taste in the arrangement of them. For a long time they examined the place, and then looked out of one of the windows to rest their eyes from such bright splendour. As Ali-Nūr leant there, the moon shining over the garden reminded him of his past honours, and he said to Sweet-Friend: "Indeed, my love, this place is very pleasant to me; it recalls only pleasant things. Peace has fallen upon my soul, and the fire which burned about my heart has sunk to a spark only."

The sheikh Ibrāhīm brought them things to eat, and they feasted abundantly. Then, after washing their hands, they returned to the window and stood looking out. Soon Ali-Nūr turned to his host, saying: "O Ibrāhīm, have you no drink to give us? Surely it is usual to drink after eating." Ibrāhīm brought them a porcelain cup filled with fresh water, but Ali-Nūr said: "That is not quite the kind of drink I wanted." "Is it wine you wish for?" asked the old man. "Certainly it is", said Ali-Nūr. "Allāh protect me from its snare!" cried Ibrāhīm. "For thirteen years I have not touched the wicked stuff, for the Prophet (on whom the peace and prayer of Allāh) has cursed them who taste fermented drink, with him who makes it and him who sells it." "I can resolve your difficulties in two words", said Ali-Nūr. "If I can show you a way of complying with my request without either drinking or making or buying wine, will you be accursed?" "I think not", answered the other, so Ali-Nūr continued: "Take these two dinārs and these two dirhams, mount your ass and ride to the market. Stop before the shop of a rose-water seller, for such folk always keep wine at the back of their shops, and call on the first passer-by to purchase two dinārs' worth of wine and keep the two dirhams for himself. He will load the wine upon the ass and we shall drink it without your suffering the least stain in the sight of God." The old man laughed aloud at this suggestion, saying: "By Allāh, I have never met a more charming or witty fellow." "Then", said Ali-Nūr, "in God's name do as we require."

On this old Ibrāhīm, who had not wished his guests to know before that there was great stock of fermented liquor in the palace, said to Alī-Nūr: "My friend, here are the keys of the cellar. It is always kept filled in case the Prince of Believers should visit his palace. Enter and help yourself to all you need."

Alī-Nūr entered the cellar and stood thunderstruck. Along all the walls and in great racks were ranged row on row of golden flagons, silver jars, and crystal bottles crusted with every kind of gem. The young man chose the rarest wines and set out the bottles on the carpet by Sweet-Friend's side. Then, after pouring wine into gold-circled cups, he sat down. While they drank together and regarded all the splendour round them, Ibrāhīm brought them perfumed flowers to crown their cups and then, as there was a woman present, sat down far from them. Soon wine brightened the cheeks of the lovers, their eyes wantoned like those of gazelles, and Sweet-Friend let down all her hair. It was not long before old Ibrāhīm became jealous of their happiness, saying to himself: "Why should I sit far off when I may never find another chance in all my days to feast with two such beautiful young people?" He therefore got up and moved nearer to them, and then, on Alī-Nūr's invitation, sat frankly down beside them. The young man filled a cup of wine and offered it to Ibrāhīm, saying: "Drink this generous wine, old man, for joy is at the bottom of the goblet." "Allāh save me from its snare, young man", answered Ibrāhīm. "I have not tasted it for thirteen years, and in that time I have twice made the sacred pilgrimage to Mecca."

Alī-Nūr, who very much wished to make him drunk, took two or three cups himself and fell over as if asleep. Sweet-Friend then looked sorrowfully at the old man and said: "See, Ibrāhīm, how he behaves towards me. It is always the same. He drinks and drinks and then sleeps, so that I am left without a companion in my cups. How can I enjoy the wine when I have no one to drink with me, or sing when there is none to hear?" Softened by her burning glances

and her sighing voice, old Ibrāhīm replied: "I must confess it does not seem a very gay way to drink." Sweet-Friend filled a cup and, handing it to him with a languorous glance, said: "Drink it to please me. I will be so grateful." Ibrāhīm drank one cup and then a second, but, when Sweet-Friend poured him out a third, he answered that he had already had enough. Nevertheless she gently insisted and leant over him, saying: "As Allāh lives, you must." So he took the cup and was carrying it to his lips when Alī-Nūr burst out laughing and sat up.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly left the rest of her tale for the morrow.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

It is related, O auspicious King, that Alī-Nūr burst out laughing, and said to Ibrāhīm: "What are you doing? Did I not beg you to drink just now and did you not refuse, telling me some great tale about a thirteen years' abstinence?" The old man was ashamed and hastened to explain that Sweet-Friend had made him drink. The two young people laughed afresh, and Sweet-Friend whispered to Alī-Nūr: "Leave me alone, and do not mock him. We shall have a good laugh presently." So saying, she poured a cup for herself and one for Alī-Nūr, and the two went on drinking round after round without paying any attention to the old man. At last Ibrāhīm could contain himself no longer and called out: "This is a strange way to invite people to drink! Have I got to look on all the time?" At this the hilarity of the other two knew no bounds, and the three drank together in great amity until a third of the night had passed.

At length Sweet-Friend asked Ibrāhīm's permission to light one of the candles in the lustre. "One only, one only", answered the old man, who was already half drunk, but Sweet-Friend lit all the eighty candles before returning to her seat. Then Alī-Nūr asked leave to

light one of the lamps, and proceeded to light the whole eighty, including the forty-five in the windows, without Ibrāhīm taking the least notice. Thus the whole palace and garden were one blaze of light, and Ibrāhīm, who was now quite reckless with his drink, rose, saying: "You are two pretty scamps!" and himself threw open all the windows. Afterwards he sat down with the two lovers and drank again, making the hall ring with laughter and song.

Now Destiny, which lies between the hands of God, the Hearer, the Maker, had decreed that the Khalīfah Hārūn al-Rashīd should be looking out, just at that time, from a window of his palace on the Tigris, enjoying the moonlight and the cool of the dark. Chancing to look across the water, he saw a great glare in the sky and, not knowing what to make of it, called for his wazīr Jafar al-Barmaki. When Jafar came, the King cried: "Dog of a wazīr, is this how you inform yourself of what passes in my city? Baghdād might be taken by assault and you not know it. Do you not see, wretch, that my Palace of Marvels is all lighted up, that someone has had the impudence to light all the lights and throw open all the windows? How can I be Khalīfah of Baghdād and such a thing come to pass?" "My lord", asked Jafar, "even if it were so, who can have told you of it?" "Look for yourself", said the Khalīfah. So Jafar looked from the window and lo! the Palace of Marvels shone like a fire across the river and dimmed the lustre of the moon.

The kind-hearted Jafar, imagining that this was some imprudence committed by old Ibrāhīm to make a little money, said to the Khalīfah: "Prince of Believers, old Ibrāhīm came to me last week and, saying that he was most anxious to perform the rites of circumcision for his son during your lifetime and mine, begged leave to have the rites performed in the Palace of Marvels. I told him to go forward with his preparations and that I would ask your leave, but somehow the whole affair slipped from my mind." "That is not one fault but two", replied the Khalīfah. "Not only did you forget to tell me, Jafar, but you did not fulfil poor old



Ibrāhīm's desire. His request only meant that he would like some money for the necessary expenses, but you gave him none yourself and deprived me of the chance of doing so." "O Prince of Believers, I forgot", repeated the wazīr.

"You are pardoned", said the Khalīfah, "but now, by the virtue of my fathers, I swear that I will spend the rest of the night with old Ibrāhīm. He is a good man, a religious man; the elders love him. I have heard that he feeds the poor, I am sure that at this moment he sits within the hall surrounded by holy men. If we visit him, some one of them may make a prayer for us which will be of benefit in the hereafter. At any rate Ibrāhīm will be delighted by the honour of our presence." "But the night is far spent, my lord", objected Jafar, "his guests will be on the point of departure." "Nevertheless I shall go", said the King, and with that Jafar had to be content, though he mightily feared the upshot of the expedition.

Without more ado the Khalīfah set out towards the Garden of Delights, followed by Jafar and Masrūr, all three being carefully disguised as merchants.

The Khalīfah, who went first, found the great gate of the garden open and turned to Jafar, saying: "He has left the gate open; that is not like old Ibrāhīm." When they had crossed the garden and come to the outside of the palace, the Khalīfah turned to Jafar again, saying: "First I must see, without being seen by all the holy guests of this faithful old man, I wish to take stock of who is there and what rich presents Ibrāhīm has given to each. But it seems that they must be deeply absorbed in their ceremonies, for I hear no sound of praying." So saying, the Khalīfah climbed, with Jafar's assistance, into a high nut tree and raised himself branch by branch until he could look through one of the windows.

He saw a youth and a girl more beautiful than twin moons (glory be to Him who made them) and old Ibrāhīm, the keeper of his garden, sitting between them with a wine cup in his hand. The

old man was saying: "Queen of all beauties, one does not taste the full savour of the wine without a song. To start that marvellous voice of yours, I will myself sing you a trifle. Listen:

*O night, O eyes of love!*

*Never drink without a song,  
Grooms who take a horse to water  
Whistle it along.*

*O night, O eyes of love!*

*Never, never drink at all  
Save with girls to make your passion  
Great as they are small.*

*O night, O eyes of love!"*

The Khalifah, seeing and hearing old Ibrāhīm busied about a song which sorted ill with his white hairs, felt the vein of anger swell between his eyes. He hurried down from the tree and fixed Jafar with a piercing glance, saying: "Never have I been so edified as by this group of holy men piously performing the ceremonies of circumcision. The night is full of salvation; climb up and take some share of the blessing for yourself." Jafar did not know what to make of this, but he climbed into the tree as he had been told.

When he saw the three drinkers, Ibrāhīm singing and waving his cup, Alī-Nūr and Sweet-Friend looking, listening and laughing, he felt that at last his time had come. He climbed out of the tree and threw himself down before the Prince of Believers. "Praise God, Jafar", said the Khalifah, "who has made us of those who ardently follow the way of salvation and has removed the

righteous from about our path, as we may see to-night. You are silent, Jafar, you know not what to answer? Jestings apart, I desire to know what has brought these two young strangers here, for I have never seen such beauty, such bodies, such gestures or such charm. I pardon you, Jafar, I pardon you. Let us both climb into the tree and see what more they do." With that they both ascended to the branch opposite the window and again looked in.

Ibrāhīm was saying: "My queen, this wine of the South slopes has destroyed my unbecoming gravity for good and all, but I shall not be truly happy until I hear you pluck the cords of harmony." "How can I pluck the cords of harmony, my friend, without a lute?" asked the girl, and straightway Ibrāhīm rose and left the hall. "What is the old rascal about now?" whispered the Khalifah to Jafar, but Jafar answered: "I know no more than Your Majesty."

Ibrāhīm returned in a few moments carrying a lute which the Sultān recognised as belonging to the glorious Ishāk, his favourite Ishāk, his favourite singer. "This is too much!" he cried. "I will hear her sing and if she sings badly I will crucify the lot of you, O Jafar. If she sings well I will spare the others and kill only you." "Allāh grant she know not how to sing!" cried Jafar. "Why is that?" asked the astonished King. "Because bad company is better than none, even in crucifixions", answered the wazīr, and the Khalifah laughed silently.

The young girl took the lute and tuned it skilfully; then, after she had played a low sweet melody which would have set the soul to dancing in a dead man and melted the heart of rocks, she sang:

*O night!*

*When they saw my thirst appeased  
Where the fountain of love bubbled,  
Lo, they said, the spring is troubled.*

*O eyes of love!*

*Therefore is my love displeased;  
Let him go, I shall not scold him,  
Wanton memories shall hold him.*

*O night!*

Sweet-Friend went on playing the lute after she had finished her song, and it was all the delighted Khalifah could do not to cry out: "Bravo!" or "O night!" Turning to Jafar, he said: "Never have I heard so beautiful or so thrilling a voice!" "Then I trust", said Jafar, "that my lord's anger has departed." "It has departed", answered the Khalifah. The two climbed down from the tree, and the Sultān said: "I am determined to enter the hall and hear the young slave sing again." "But, my lord", objected Jafar, "if you go in as you are, the two young people will be confused and the old man die of fright." "If that be so", said the King, "you must think out some plan by which I can discover the whole matter without being recognised."

While Jafar was racking his brains, the Khalifah walked towards a sheet of water which lay in the middle of the garden. This water communicated with the Tigris and held a multitude of fishes which came up to enjoy the food which was thrown to them. Once the Khalifah had seen many fishermen collected about this water while he was looking out from the Palace of Marvels; therefore he had commanded old Ibrāhīm to allow no fishermen into the garden and to punish any who disobeyed the order.

That night a certain fisherman called Karīm, who was well known up and down the Tigris, had seen the garden door open and had said to himself: "Now is my chance for a little good fishing." As the Khalifah approached, he was standing by the lake watching his net and singing:

ARABIAN LOVE TALES

*O you who go with heavy bales  
Beneath a press of sounding sails,  
Pity the fisher by his nets at sea:  
Under a night of stars  
Weary and worn he wars,  
That you may eat your fish in luxury.*

*Night-long he sees the heaving breasts  
Of his nets on the water crests  
And never any other breast sees he;  
While you wake with the day  
Beside a sleeping may  
Whose breasts are like the sun upon the sea.*

*Yet my laborious nights and days  
Are consecrated to His praise  
Who gives each man a station carefully;  
By Whose eternal wish  
Ther're some to eat the fish  
And some to catch them in the nets at sea.*

As Karīm finished his song, the Khalīfah came up behind him and, recognising him, cried out: "Karīm!" The fisherman turned and saw the Sultān standing there in the moonlight. Quaking with terror he said: "As Allāh lives, O Prince of the Faithful, I have not done this through disobedience but because of poverty and a great family." "That is well, Karīm", said the Khalīfah. "I have seen nothing. Now cast your net in the water that I may have notice of my luck." Joyfully the fisherman threw his net, calling upon the name of Allāh, and waited for it to sink. When he drew it to shore, it was bursting with a multitude of fishes of all kinds. "Good!" said the Sultān. "Now undress yourself." Karīm hastened to do so; he drew off his deep-sleeved robe, patched with a miscellany of

rags and jumping alive with every kind of bug and enough fleas to cover the whole earth; next he took off his turban which had not been unwound for three years. As the months went by he had sewn chance rags and tags of stuff to it, and now it was full to bursting with great and little lice, black and white lice, lice of all colours and all sizes. When he stood naked before the Khalifah, the latter also undressed, removing his first robe of Iskandar silk, his second robe of Baalbakk silk, his velvet mantle, and his embroidered waistcoat, and put on the fisherman's robe and turban. Wrapping the head-veil about his chin, he said: "Put on my clothes and go your way." Thereupon Karīm improvised this stanza:

*My thanks shall swell in lasting tones  
Because your gift is choice;  
While I'm alive I'll praise you with my voice  
And when I'm dead by rattling of my bones.*

Hardly had Karīm finished speaking than the Khalifah felt all the skin of his body violently attacked by the bugs and lice which lived in the rags. He started throwing them from him with both hands, casting them by multitudes from his neck and breast with expressions of horror. "Miserable Karīm!" he cried to the fisherman. "How have you collected all these deadly beasts?" Then said Karīm: "My lord, in a week's time you will not even feel them." "How, must I wear this terrible garment for a week?" asked the Sultān. "My lord", answered Karīm, "I have a thing to say, and yet dare not." "Speak", said the Khalifah. "An idea has struck me, Commander of the Faithful", said Karīm, "I believe that you wish to learn how to get your living as a fisherman. If that is so, you could not have better clothes than mine."

The Khalifah laughed again and, dismissing the fisherman, covered all the fish in their palm-leaf basket with fresh grass, and went to rejoin Jafar and Masrūr. When Jafar saw him coming, he

said: "What are you doing here, Karīm? I advise you to go away at once, as the Sultān is in the garden to-night." At this Hārūn al-Rashīd laughed so much that he fell over on his backside, at which Jafar cried out: "By Allāh, it is the King!" "It is, good Jafar", answered the Sultān, "and you, who live ever about me, do not recognise me. How then will Ibrāhīm recognise me when he is drunk? Wait for me here."

The Khalīfah knocked at the palace door, and old Ibrāhīm rose, crying: "Who is there?" "It is I, Karīm the fisherman", answered the Khalīfah. "I heard that you had guests, so I have brought you some fine live fish."

Both Ali-Nūr and Sweet-Friend were very fond of fish, so, when they heard this talk of fresh and living fishes, they called delightedly to Ibrāhīm to open the door. He did so, and the disguised Khalīfah entered with many respectful greetings. Ibrāhīm, seeing who it was, laughed and called out: "Welcome, robber! Welcome, thief! Welcome, poacher! Let us have a look at these wonderful fish." The Khalīfah lifted the grass and showed the wriggling, leaping catch. "They are excellent! Would that they were fried!" cried Sweet-Friend. "You are right", said Ibrāhīm. "Why did you not bring them here fried, O fisherman? Take them, cook them, and bring them back." "I hear and I obey!" said the Khalīfah, and, as he went out, all three called after him: "Fry them, fry them, and bring them back!"

The Khalīfah found Jafar and told him what had passed. "I will fry them myself, Prince of Believers", said the wazīr. "By the tomb of my fathers, I will fry them", insisted the Khalīfah. With that he went to the little hut of reeds where Ibrāhīm lived and hunted about until he found frying-pans, butter, salt, thyme, laurel, and all else that he needed. He went to the fire, saying: "Remember, O Hārūn, how you were ever about the kitchen as a boy, delighting to help the women. Now is the time to show your skill." He put butter in the pan and, while waiting for it to boil, cleaned, washed

and salted the fish, and covered them lightly with flour. When the butter was piping hot, and not before, he placed the fish in it. After one side was done, he turned each piece with infinite art. When the other sides were coloured a crisp brown, he spread all the fillets on fresh green banana-leaves. Lastly, he took lemons from the garden and, garnishing the leaves with slices of them, carried all to the three in the palace.

Alī-Nūr, Sweet-Friend and old Ibrāhīm ate all the fish, and, when they had washed their hands, Alī-Nūr said: "It is a good deed that you have done to-night, O fisherman." Then he drew out three of the gold dīnārs which the faithful Sanjar had given him at Basrah and, handing them to the fisherman, continued: "Excuse, in Allāh's name, the poverty of my thanks. Before some things which came to pass had come to pass, I would have freed you from the bitterness of thrift for ever. As it is, I can only give you these." The Khalīfah kissed the coins and then pressed them to his forehead, in sign that he thanked both God and the giver.

All this time the Sultān's desire to hear the young slave sing again had been increasing, so, slipping the money into his pocket, he said to Alī-Nūr: "I will never forget your generosity, young master. But dare I ask a further thing, that which I most desire in all the world? I long to hear this young girl play upon the lute and sing a song; lute-playing and singing are more than life itself to me."

Alī-Nūr turned to Sweet-Friend, saying: "If my life is dear to you, sing something for this fisherman." So Sweet-Friend took the lute and, playing a brilliant prelude on the strings, sang this:

*Wind-blown like a reed  
 Playing and singing  
 She stood before us,  
 The deaf took heed,  
 And, as the notes came ringing,  
 The dumb made chorus.*



She went on playing so melodiously when her song was finished that those who heard her nearly wept. Then she smiled and broke into a second song:

*Your eyes chased all the shadows from our house,  
Your boyish foot trod on our sill,  
It is singing and shining still.  
Would I not scatter over all our house  
Rare gum and musk-rose and rare gum again  
If that could make you come again?*

Sweet-Friend sang this song so pleasantly that the heart of the Khalifah was moved within him, and he cried: "Good, by Allāh! Good, by Allāh! Good, by Allāh!" "You like her singing and her playing, then?" asked Ali-Nūr. "Indeed I do!" replied the Khalifah. So the young man who, as we have seen, was accustomed to give his guests anything that pleased them, said: "Since you find her to your liking, O fisherman, she is yours. I am not one of those who give and then take back. She is yours as a free gift." He rose and, throwing his cloak about his shoulders, was about to leave the hall without saying a word of farewell to Sweet-Friend, in order that the fisherman might take immediate possession of her, when she looked at him with her eyes full of tears, saying: "Ali-Nūr, would you cast me aside and leave me thus without a word of farewell? Stay but for a moment; speak to me; listen to me:

*Blood of my heart,  
Who lie between my breast-bone and my womb,  
Would you depart?*

*God of pity,  
Let death be the enchanted lover whom  
You send to me."*

Alī-Nūr drew near her and answered:

*“Her tears are falling as I go away,  
And how will I do far from her, she asks.  
To answer that is one of the sweet tasks  
Of him who stays behind with her, I say.”*

The Khalīfah was both grieved at being the cause of the separation of these two young people and surprised at the ease with which Alī-Nūr could part with her. “Tell me, young man”, he said, “for I am old enough to be your father, are you afraid of being arrested and punished for having stolen this slave from someone?” “The damsel and I have gone through stranger adventures than that”, answered Alī-Nūr. “If our sorrows were written with needles on the corners of an eye, yet they would be a lesson to the circumspect.” “Let me hear all”, said the Khalīfah, “for you never know when succour may be at hand, and the consolation of Allāh is never far away.” “How would you like to hear my story, fisherman”, asked the young man, “in verse or prose?” “Prose is embroidery on silk”, answered the Khalīfah, “but verses are a thread of pearls.” “Let it be pearls, then”, said Alī-Nūr, and, shutting his eyes, he improvised these lines:

*I am far from the bed of my mirth  
And the land of my birth,  
My father who walked the earth  
(Whose soul may Allāh save!)  
With silvered virtues such as the saints have  
Lies long in the cold grave.  
But before he died  
He gave me a slave to bride  
For whom I sighed.  
I lived in sweet expense*

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*With a plentiful lack of sense,  
And I date my ruin thence.  
There was much gentle strife  
Between us; to save my life  
I consented to sell my wife.  
But an old goat tried to buy her,  
Without letting the folk bid higher,  
So I rose up in my ire  
And beat him about the face.  
He was a man of place  
And plotted my disgrace.  
A friend I had at the King's  
Hinted at terrible things,  
So I took the sea's white wings.  
I am beggared in your city  
Save for this sweet-voiced, witty,  
Young and scented and pretty  
Girl of the rose's hue.  
If I give her to you,  
I am giving my heart's blood too.*

“So much for this fair series of pearls, my master”, said the Khalifah, “now let us have a little of the silk embroidery of your tale.” So Ali-Nūr told him all his story with full details, still thinking that he spoke to Karīm the fisherman.

When the Khalifah understood the whole tale, he asked Ali-Nūr what he intended to do. “The roads of Allāh are wide roads”, answered the other. “Listen to me, young man”, said the Khalifah. “I am only a lowly fisherman, yet I can sit down now and write you a letter to take to the Sultān of Basrah which will have very happy consequences for you.”

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

It is related, O auspicious King, that Ali-Nūr answered the Khalifah in these words: "Who has ever heard of a fisherman writing to kings?" "I will explain all the mystery", said Hārūn al-Rashīd. "When I was a child, I learned to read and write in the same school and under the same master as Muhammad ibn Sulaimān al-Zainī. I learned more quickly than he did to say the Koran by heart and to write beautifully; but we remained great friends, though he has become a king and I am a simple fisherman. He has never been proud or ceased to correspond with me. I have but to ask a thing for him to do it." "Write then, in God's name", said Ali-Nūr, "that I may see if it advantage me."

The Khalifah sat down cross-legged upon the floor and, spreading a sheet of paper over his left palm, wrote the following letter:

IN THE NAME OF ALLĀH, THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE!  
And after!

This letter is sent by me, Hārūn al-Rashīd, son of Mahdī of the race of Abbās, to my tributary Muhammad ibn Sulaimān al-Zainī, who is wrapped with my grace and a king over one of my kingdoms through my kindness!

The bearer of this is Ali-Nūr, son of al-Fadl ibn Kahkān, lately your wazīr, now dwelling in the clemency of Allāh.

When you have read this, come down from your throne and anoint Ali-Nūr king in your place. The authority I gave to you, I now invest in him.

Let there be no delay.

Peace be with you.

The Khalifah sealed this letter and handed it to Ali-Nūr without telling him what was in it. The young man folded it in his turban,

after having kissed and carried it to his forehead, and set out immediately for Basrah, leaving Sweet-Friend to weep her heart out in a corner.

Old Ibrāhīm, who had said nothing all this while, now turned to the Khalīfah, crying: "Most evil of all fishermen, you have brought us two or three wretched fish worth twenty copper pieces and now, not content with receiving three golden dīnārs, you want to add this young girl to your price. But I know a trick worth two of that. You shall halve the money and share the girl with me, and, what is more, I will have first turn at her."

The Khalīfah threw a terrible glance at old Ibrāhīm and, going to one of the windows, clapped his hands. His two companions rushed in; Masrūr threw himself upon Ibrāhīm, and Jafar handed a magnificent robe, which he had sent for in haste, to the Khalīfah, who straightway threw aside his rags and dressed himself in silk and gold.

Ibrāhīm recognised the Sultān and, though doubting he was awake, began to bite his finger-ends for shame. "What a state is this?" asked the Khalīfah in his ordinary tones. Then the old man came out of his drunkenness and threw himself face downward on the floor, crying through his dusty beard:

*Let clemency begin  
Before your heart can barden,  
You have the power to pardon,  
I, but the power to sin.*

"I pardon you", answered the Khalīfah, and then turned to Sweet-Friend, saying: "My dear, now that you know who I am, let me lead you to the palace." So all of them left the Garden of Delights.

At the palace the Khalīfah gave Sweet-Friend a chamber to herself, and appointed servants and slaves to attend her. When she

was settled in her new quarters, he said to her: "Sweet-Friend, for the time being you belong to me, because I desire you and because Alī-Nūr has given you to me. I have recompensed him with the kingship of Basrah and very soon, if Allāh wills, shall send him a costly robe of honour. You will bear it to him and reign by his side as queen."

He then took Sweet-Friend in his arms and they lay lovingly together all night.

When Alī-Nūr arrived, by the grace of Allāh, at Basrah, he went directly to the palace of the Sultān and cried a great cry. The Sultān, hearing the cry, commanded the messenger to be brought to him and, when he recognised the writing of the Khalifah in the letter, stood up and carried the paper three times to his lips and to his brow. He read the lines attentively and said: "I hear and I obey. The voice of the Khalifah is the voice of God." He called the four kādīs of the city and the amīrs, and was about to resign his throne in their presence when the wazīr Sāwī came into the hall. The Sultān showed him the letter and bade him read it. Sāwī did so and then with a quick movement of his hand tore off the bottom of the paper which bore the Khalifah's black seal, chewed it in his mouth, and spat it to the ground. "Miserable Sāwī", exclaimed the Sultān in flaming anger, "what devil possessed you to do that?" "My King, this rascal has never seen the Khalifah or his wazīr", answered Sāwī. "He is a gaolbird, a vicious trickster. He must have found an odd scrap of the royal writing and forged this letter. If the Khalifah had sent him, he would have provided him with a true King's letter, written out fairly by the palace scribe, and with some chamberlain or wazīr to bear him company." "What shall I do then?" asked the Sultān, and Sāwī answered: "Trust the young man to me and I will learn the truth. I shall send a chamberlain with him to Baghdād; if what he says is true, he can bring us back an official letter; if not, I will find a way to make him pay in full for his misdeeds."

Sāwi went on talking to the Sultān in this train until the latter grew to believe that Alī-Nūr was really guilty of forgery. He flew into a violent rage and called to his guards to seize the young man and beat him. They threw him to the earth and rained blows upon him till he fainted. Then, at the Sultān's orders, they chained him hand and foot, and fetched the chief gaoler into the royal presence.

In the King's name the wazīr ordered the gaoler Kutait to throw Alī-Nūr into the deepest dungeon and to torture him night and day. Answering that he would do so, Kutait led the young man to gaol.

But, when they were in the cell, Kutait shut the door, swept the ground and, cleaning a bench near the door, covered it with a thick carpet. Then, approaching Alī-Nūr, he took off his chains and bade him repose himself on the bench, saying: "Master, I have not forgotten the generosity of your father. Fear nothing!" Thereafter, for forty days, he treated Alī-Nūr with every consideration and at the same time sent a daily bulletin to the wazīr describing the terrible tortures and beatings which the young man was supposed to be suffering.

On the forty-first day a magnificent present came to the King of Basrah from the Khalifah. As ibn Sulaimān was not able to understand the exceeding richness of it or why it was sent, he called his amīrs and asked their advice. Some suggested that the gift was meant for the young man who had claimed to be the new Sultān, and this reminded the King of Alī-Nūr's existence. Then said the wazīr Sāwi: "My lord, did you not decide that it would be better to get rid of this fellow?" "By Allāh, so I did!" answered the Sultān. "Send for him immediately and cut off his head." Sāwi then asked leave to have the following announcement cried through the public streets: "Let all those who wish to see the execution of Alī-Nūr, son of al-Fadl, son of Kakhān, assemble straightway outside the palace." The Sultān gave him permission, and he departed with his heart refreshed by gratified hatred.

When the announcement was made in the city, all the people wept, the merchants in their shops, the little children in the school. Some ran to the palace to see the sad spectacle of the death itself, and others hurried in a crowd to the gates of the prison to make a procession when Alī-Nūr should be led forth.

The wazīr Sāwi took ten of his guards and, hastening to the prison, demanded admittance. But Kutait pretended not to know why he had come and asked what he wanted. "Bring me that young villain whom I entrusted to you forty days ago", said Sāwi, and the gaoler answered: "He is far gone with all the blows and tortures, but I obey." He made his way to Alī-Nūr's cell and found him murmuring these lines:

*Walls rise about my guilt,  
My life is done,  
My blood is spilt,  
The measure of my heart is nearly run.*

*There is none to save  
The remnant of my breath,  
I pant for the sweet grave  
And thirst after the sleepy cup of death.  
Guide to the feet of saints,  
Master above,  
My spirit faints,  
I sink within your love.*

Kutait explained what had happened and, helping Alī-Nūr off with his own clothes, dressed him in a prisoner's rags and led him out to the wazīr. Alī-Nūr saw his foe trembling with rage and understood how lasting was his hatred. Nevertheless he spoke up boldly, saying: "Here I am, O Sāwi. Do you think that Destiny will be always on your side? It has been written:



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*They sat on a high seat  
And snipped the robe of Justice by the hem;  
But now they lie with folded feet  
And the worms out-argue them.*

Allāh alone disposes; remember that, O my enemy!" "Do you think, O Alī, that you can put me out of countenance with all your quotations?" answered the wazīr. "I would have you know that I am going to cut off your head in spite of all the dogs in Basrah. As you would say, I am going to follow the advice of a certain poet:

*Let time do what it will,  
I shall do ill.*

Another poet has beautifully written:

*Who sees his foe lie dead, the same  
Scores one point in the game."*

With that he ordered his guards to throw Alī-Nūr on to the back of a mule; yet they hesitated because the crowd called out to Alī-Nūr as soon as he appeared: "Say but the word and we will stone this man. We will tear him to pieces if we die for it!" But Alī-Nūr called back: "Do not do so, my friends. Remember rather what the poet has said:

*Fate has determined on a minute  
And I die in it."*

The guards hoisted Alī-Nūr on the back of a mule and led him through all the city, crying: "Thus forgers die!" until they came to the Sultān's palace. Here Alī-Nūr was stationed on the place of blood, and the executioner, with a drawn sword in his hand, approached him, saying: "I am your slave. If there is anything I

can do for you, tell me now and I will do it, for your life lasts only until the Sultān puts his head out of the window." Alī-Nūr looked to right and left, and cried aloud these lines:

*Is there none  
To strike a stroke with the sword  
Against this borde?  
He can be my lord.  
Is there none?*

*Is there none,  
Is there none of you all  
With a hand to stay the fall  
Of life's down-tottering wall,  
Is there none?*

*Is there none  
To fill cold water up  
In a simple cup  
For my dying lips to sup?  
Is there none?  
Is there none?*

The crowd began to weep, and the executioner himself handed a glass of water to Alī-Nūr. But the wazīr Sāwi jumped from his place and broke the cup, crying in a furious voice: "What are you waiting for?" So the executioner bandaged the young man's eyes, and all the crowd rose, as it were a sea of indignation, and their threats and curses against the wazīr were like the sudden rising of a storm. Alī-Nūr's last moment seemed to have come, but suddenly the noise of an approaching troop was heard and a great cloud of dust was seen to be sweeping towards the palace.

At this moment the Sultān put his head out of the window and,

seeing the dust, told those about him to go and find out what it meant. "Let us cut off this head first!" cried Sāwi, but the Sultān said: "Be silent!"

Now that dust was raised by the feet of the horses of the wazīr Jafar and his companions. The reason of their coming was this:

The Khalīfah, after one night of love passed in Sweet-Friend's arms, remained for thirty days without thinking of her once, or remembering anything of the tale of Ali-Nūr. There was no one to remind him. But on a certain night, as he was passing Sweet-Friend's apartment, he heard the sound of tears and a voice singing very low:

*Delight,  
Your shadow leaves me not  
By day or night.  
I still have got  
This semblance of a lover:  
Your shadow and your name Delight,  
Delight, Delight,  
Said and said over.*

As the sound of the weeping was redoubled after the song had finished, the Khalīfah opened the door and entered the room. When Sweet-Friend saw him, she threw herself at his feet and kissed them three times. Then she said:

*Do not forget, O tree of trees  
Bowed down by generousities,  
You have not kept your promise yet;  
O golden branch, do not forget.*

But still the Khalīfah did not recall her and asked who she was. "I am the gift of Ali-Nūr, son of Kahkān," answered Sweet-Friend. "May I beg my King to fulfil the promise which he made of sending

me back honourably to Alī-Nūr? I have been here for thirty days without tasting the nourishment of sleep." At these words the Khalīfah sent in haste for Jafar and said: "It is thirty days since I have heard any news of Alī-Nūr. I think it possible that the Sultān of Basrah has put him to death. But I swear, by my head and by the tomb of my fathers, that I shall kill anyone who has harmed the young man, even though he were my greatest friend. I wish you to set out instantly for Basrah and bring me news of how Muhammad ibn Sulaimān has treated Alī-Nūr."

Jafar set out and arrived at Basrah as has been related. Hearing the cries and lamentations of the excited crowd, he asked the reason of these things, and a thousand voices told what had happened to Alī-Nūr: Jafar hastened into the palace and wished the Sultān peace, saying: "If any harm has come to Alī-Nūr, I am ordered to kill his oppressor and to take full vengeance on you also, O Sultān. Tell me now, how is it with the young man?"

The Sultān sent for Alī-Nūr from the place of execution and no sooner had he entered the palace than Jafar ordered the guards to arrest the Sultān and his wazīr Sāwi. He named Alī-Nūr King of Basrah and set him on the throne instead of Muhammad al-Zainī.

Jafar abode for three days of ceremony with the new King of Basrah, but, on the morning of the fourth day, Alī-Nūr told him that he greatly desired to set eyes again upon the Prince of Believers. Jafar approved his wish, and, after the saying of the morning prayer, they both set out for Baghdād, accompanied by a numerous retinue and haling Muhammad ibn Sulaimān and Sāwi along with them. Through all the long journey the wicked wazīr had plenty of time to reflect and to bite the fists of repentance.

Alī-Nūr rode joyfully beside Jafar until the company reached Baghdād, the home of peace. As soon as they arrived, Jafar told the whole story to the Khalīfah, who bade Alī-Nūr approach and said to him: "Take this sword and cut off the head of your enemy, the most miserable Sāwi." So Alī-Nūr took the sword and went up

to the false wazīr. The latter looked at him, saying: "O Ali-Nūr, I have behaved towards you according to my character. Do you now behave towards me according to yours." So Ali-Nūr threw down the sword and, saying to the Khalīfah: "Prince of Believers, he has disarmed me", bitterly quoted this couplet:

*I saw my foe was noble, so found a way of beating him  
By acting very nobly and by generously treating him.*

The Khalīfah cried out to Masrūr, who approached the wazīr Sāwi and cut off his head with a single blow. Then Hārūn al-Rashīd told Ali-Nūr to ask for whatever recompense he wished, and the young man answered: "Master, I desire no kingdom, nor would I willingly have anything to do with the throne of Basrah. I shall consider that I have attained the greatest happiness of my life if I may remain near Your Majesty for the rest of my days." "That is well spoken, and sits close to my heart", answered the Khalīfah. He sent for Sweet-Friend and returned her to Ali-Nūr, also he showered riches upon both of them, gave them one of the fairest palaces in all Baghdād, and appointed them a magnificent pension from the treasury. He made an intimate friend of Ali-Nūr and pardoned the Sultān Muhammad al-Zainī, re-establishing him upon his throne and warning him to be more careful in future whom he chose as wazīr. They all lived in joy and prosperity until their deaths.





## THE TALE OF HAPPY-HANDSOME AND HAPPY-FAIR

*But when the night had come*

DUNYAZĀD cried: "O Shahrazād, dear sister, please begin!"

Shahrazād smiled at her sister and then, turning towards King Shahryār, said:

It is related—but Allāh is all-wise and all-knowing—that there was once a rich and respected merchant in the city of Kūfah, whose name was Spring. A year after his marriage the blessing of the Highest descended upon his house, for a handsome son was born to him. As the child came into the world smiling, his father called him Happy-Handsome.

Seven days after the birth of his son, the merchant Spring went down to the slave-market to buy a hand-maiden for his wife and, looking over the women and boys exposed for sale, saw a pleasant-faced slave, who carried her little daughter fastened on her back by a broad belt. Saying to himself: "Allāh is generous", he approached the broker and asked how much the two would cost him. "Fifty dīnārs, neither more nor less", said the broker, and at once the merchant answered: "I will take them. Write out the contract and receive the money." When these formalities had been gone through, the merchant said kindly to the young woman: "Follow me, my child", and led her to his house.

As soon as his wife saw the slave, she exclaimed: "O husband, why have you gone to this useless expense? For, although I have just risen from childbed, I can still manage the affairs of the house as I did before." "Dear wife", answered the merchant, "I bought this slave because of her little daughter, whom I intend to bring up with our own Happy-Handsome. I prophesy that, when she has grown up, she will not have her equal for beauty in all the lands of Irāk, Persia and Arabia."



The merchant's wife asked the slave her name, and the other answered that she was called Prosperity. "As Allāh lives, it suits you!" cried the delighted wife. "And what is your daughter's name?" "Fortune", answered the slave. Pleased by this omen, the mistress exclaimed: "May it be so! I pray that Allāh will continue prosperity and fortune upon those who have bought you, O white auspicious face!"

Then, turning to her husband, she said: "As it is the custom for folk to give a new name to the slave they buy, what will you call the little girl?" "It is for you to choose the name", answered Spring. "Then let us call her Happy-Fair", exclaimed his wife. "An excellent name!" said the merchant.

Happy-Fair was brought up with Happy-Handsome, on exactly the same footing. The two grew every day in beauty and called each other brother and sister.

When Happy-Handsome was five years old, it was time to celebrate his circumcision, but the merchant waited for the birthday of the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!), so that all possible beauty might attend the precious rite. With due solemnity the child was circumcised and, instead of crying, found the operation pleasant and smiled sweetly. An imposing procession was formed of relations, friends and acquaintances, which walked through all the streets of Kūfah with flags and clarinets at its head. Happy-Handsome was perched on a red palanquin, borne by a mule with brocaded trappings, and little Happy-Fair sat by his side, fanning him with a silk handkerchief. Amid the joyful "Lū-lū-lū!" of his friends, the merchant Spring walked proudly, leading the docile and important mule.

As soon as the procession returned to the house, the guests came one after the other to take leave of the merchant and congratulate him, saying: "Blessing and honour be upon you! May every joy that your soul desires continue with you throughout a long life!"

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

WHEN the children were twelve years old, the merchant Spring found Happy-Handsome in act to play the husband with little Happy-Fair. Therefore he took him aside, saying: "Thanks to the blessing of Allāh, my child, you have now reached the age of twelve. Henceforth you must not call Happy-Fair your sister, for I must tell you that she is the daughter of our slave, Prosperity, although she was brought up in the same cradle with you. Your mother tells me that the child last week reached her marriageable epoch. Now she must veil her face until a husband be found for her who shall add to the number of our faithful slaves."

"As Happy-Fair is no longer my sister", said Happy-Handsome to his father, "I would like to have her for my own wife." "We must ask your mother's permission", answered the merchant.

Happy-Handsome ran to his mother and kissed her hand, saying: "I wish to have Happy-Fair as my secret wife." "She belongs to you, my dear", answered his mother, "your father bought her for you."

Delighted to have gained his point, the boy hurried to his one-time sister and took her by the hand; that night they slept together as happy married folk.

For five blissful years they lived together, and in the whole city of Kūfah there was not to be found a girl more beautiful, more submissive, or more learned than the daughter-in-law of the merchant Spring. Happy-Fair had used her leisure to learn the Koran, various sciences, Kūfic and ordinary character, literature and poetry, and the practice of stringed instruments. She had studied singing to such purpose that she was perfect in fifteen

ways and, if she were given a single word of the first stanza, could, from her own invention, prolong a song for several hours or even all night, with infinite variations and ravishing rhythms.

Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair spent the warm hours of each day sitting in their garden, on the naked marble of the fish-pond, refreshed by the cool water and the cool stone. There they ate the light melting flesh of water-melons, almonds and nuts, roast and salted corn; there they would pause in their nibbling to smell the roses and jasmine, or to recite exquisite verses. Sometimes, for instance, Happy-Handsome would beg the girl to play a prelude on her double-stringed guitar, and the two would sing alternate stanzas such as these:

*Girl,  
It is raining flowers  
And small coloured birds,  
Let us wander with the wind  
To warm Baghdād,  
To the rose domes.*

*Not so, lord;  
Let us stay in the garden  
Under the gold palms  
And dream.*

*Girl,  
Diamonds fall on the blue leaves,  
The curves of the branches are beautiful  
Against the sky.  
Rise,  
Shake the drops from your hair.*

*Not so, lord:  
Lay your head upon my knees,  
Taste the flowers of my breast  
Among my garments,  
And listen to the light wind.*

Or they would sing verses such as these:

*I am happy and light  
Like a light dancer.*

*Breathe no more,  
O lips red upon flutes;  
Be still,  
Fingers on silver strings;  
That we may hear the palms.*

*The palms are girls  
Standing under the night  
And whispering to each other,  
Their green hair dances  
To the flute-playing of the west wind.*

*I am happy and light  
Like a light dancer.*

*Perfumed delight,  
The singing of your voice  
Builds up a palace of living marble  
For Him who bade love be beautiful,  
Perfumed delight.*

ARABIAN LOVE TALES

*You who are darkness about my eyes,  
I will paint the lids of them azure  
With a stick of crystal,  
And in a bright paste of henna  
Stain my fingers,  
My hands shall be date-coloured  
For your pleasure,  
I shall burn a delicate incense  
Below my breasts for  
You who are darkness about my eyes.*

Thus Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair passed their mornings and evenings in the calm and sheltered life of a garden.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

ALAS, alas! That which the finger of Allāh has written upon the brow of man, the hand of man can in no wise efface; though he had wings, no creature could escape his Destiny. The buffets of Fate were made ready for Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair, but the benediction of their birth was such that they would escape final and incurable misfortune.

The Khalifah's governor in Kūfah, hearing of the beauty of Happy-Fair, said to himself: "I must find some way to abduct this paragon, this charming musician; for she will make a splendid present to give to the Commander of the Faithful, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān!"

When the day came on which the governor finally determined to put his plan into execution, he sent for a very cunning old woman, whose usual business was the recruiting and special instruction of young slaves, and said to her: "I wish you to go to the house of the

merchant Spring and get to know a slave belonging to his son, a girl called Happy-Fair, who is said to be both musical and beautiful. By hook or by crook you must bring her here to me, for I wish to send her as a present to the Khalifah." "I hear and I obey!" answered the old woman and at once went out to make her preparations.

Early next morning she dressed herself in drugget, hung round her neck a prodigious chaplet of thousands of beads, fastened a gourd to her belt, took a crutch in her hands and made her way with dragging steps towards the house of the merchant Spring. At every few paces she would stop with a loud and holy sigh: "Praise be to Allāh! There is no other God but Allāh! There is no help save in Allāh! Allāh is the Highest!" Thus were all the people upon the road she took edified in the extreme. She came at last to the house and knocked at the door, saying: "Allāh is generous, O Benefactor, O Giver!"

A respectable old man, who had been for a long time in the service of Spring, came to the door and, inspecting the devout caller, determined that her face did not bear the imprint of piety. For her part, the old woman took an instinctive dislike to the door-keeper and gave him a sidelong glance. To protect himself from the evil-eye, he said beneath his breath: "My left five fingers in your right eye, the five others in your left!" and then aloud: "What do you wish, old aunt?" "I am a poor old woman whose sole concern is prayer", she answered, "and now that the time of prayer is at hand I wish to enter this house and make my devotions." The good door-keeper objected, saying harshly: "Walk on now! This is not a mosque or an oratory but the house of the merchant Spring." "I know that well", answered the old woman, "but is any mosque or oratory more worthy of prayer than the blessed house of Spring and his son Happy-Handsome? Also, I would have you know, O dry-faced door-keeper, that I am a woman well thought of in the palace of the Commander of the Faithful at Damascus. I

only journeyed thence to visit the sacred places and to pray upon all those spots which are worthy of veneration." But the door-keeper answered: "I can see that you are a holy woman but that is no reason why you should come in here. Walk on now!" The old woman insisted loud and long until the noise reached the ears of Happy-Handsome, who came out and heard the old woman saying: "How can you prevent a woman of my quality entering the house of Happy-Handsome, when the most closely guarded doors of the great are ever open to me?"

Happy-Handsome smiled as was his wont and, begging the old woman to follow him, brought her in and led her to the apartment of Happy-Fair. The old dame looked at the girl while she wished her peace, and was stupefied by her beauty.

Happy-fair, seeing the saintly old woman come in to her, rose in her honour and returned her bow respectfully, saying: "May your coming be a good augury, O excellent mother! Be so obliging as to rest yourself." "The hour of prayer is at hand, my daughter. Let me pray!" answered the old woman, as she turned in the direction of Mecca and threw herself into the attitude of prayer. She stayed so without moving until the evening, and none dared interrupt so holy an occupation; during that time she took no notice of what was going on round her, because of the depth of her ecstasy.

At last Happy-Fair plucked up courage to approach the saint, saying sweetly: "My mother, rest now, if it be only for an hour." "My child", answered the old woman, "those who do not fatigue their bodies in this world may not hope to taste that rest which is laid up for the chosen pure in Paradise." Happy-Fair was much edified, and said: "We beg you to honour our table with your presence and to share bread and salt with us." "I have made a vow of fasting, my daughter", replied the other. "Think no more of me but rejoin your husband; when one is young and beautiful it is right to eat and drink and care for happiness."

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

HAPPY-FAIR went to her husband and said to him: "Master, let us beg this saint to make her home with us, for the piety of her face will light up all our house." "Take no thought for that", answered Happy-Handsome, "I have already set aside a room for her and furnished it with a new mat and a mattress, with a basin and an ewer. No one will disturb her there."

The old woman passed the night in praying and reading the Koran at the top of her voice; at dawn she washed and went to her hosts, saying: "I have come to say farewell. May Allāh guard you!" "But, mother", said Happy-Fair, "how can you leave us thus easily when we are so delighted with the thought of having our house made permanently sacred by your presence, and have already set aside our best room for your quiet prayers?" "The blessing and the grace of Allāh be upon you, my children!" said the dame. "Now that the virtue of Mussulmān charity holds the chief place in your hearts, I desire to be sheltered by your hospitality. Only I would beg you to command your dry-faced and unobliging door-keeper not to oppose my entrance at the hour when I can return. I go now to visit the sacred places of Kūfah, where I will pray to Allāh that He may reward you according to your deserts; after that I shall return to sweeten myself with your charity." The two young people kissed her hands and carried them to their brows; and she departed.

Alas, poor Happy-Fair! Had you but known the reason of this foul old woman's coming, the black plans which she nourished against your peace! But who may divine what is hidden, or unveil the future?

The beldame went straight to the governor's palace and into his presence. "O unweaver of spiders' webs, O subtle and sublime



practitioner of evil, what have you accomplished?" asked the governor. "Such as I am, O master", answered the old woman, "I am but your pupil . . . I have seen the girl Happy-Fair; the womb of fecundity has never before brought forth such beauty." "Yā Allāh!" cried the governor, and the old woman continued: "She is steeped in delights, she is a running river of sweetness and unconscious charm." "O beating of my heart!" exclaimed the governor, and the old woman answered: "What then would you say if you heard the ring of her voice, which is more refreshing than the sound of water under an echoing arch? What would you do if you saw her antelope eyes, which are modestly cast down?" "I am afraid that I could not do more than admire", said the governor, "for, as I have told you, I intend her as a present to the Khalifah. Make haste with your plots, I beg you." "I must ask a whole month for them", she said. "Take the month, but mind that you succeed", he replied. "Here to begin with are a thousand dīnārs, as earnest of my generosity."

The old woman fastened the money within her belt and began a daily series of visits to the house of Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair, who, as time went on, showed her more and more respect and consideration.

When she had become, as it were, perpetual adviser to the household, she said to Happy-Fair: "My daughter, conception has never visited your young thighs. Would you like to come with me to ask the blessing of holy ascetics, old men loved by Allāh, saints and walīs who are in communication with the Highest? These walīs are known to me and I have experienced their great power to do miracles and accomplish prodigious matters in the name of Allāh. They cure the blind and infirm, they raise the dead, they swim through the air, they walk on the water. As for the fecundation of women, that is one of the least privileges which God has given them. It suffices to touch the skirt of their robe or to kiss their beads, and the thing is done."

Happy-Fair felt her spirit tremble with a desire for child-bearing as she answered: "I must get leave from my master to go with you, therefore let us wait till he comes back." "Tell your mother-in-law, that will be enough", said the old woman. The young wife ran to Happy-Handsome's mother, saying: "In Allāh's name give me leave to go forth with this holy saint to visit the walīs, the friends of Allāh, and ask for a blessing from them in their pure abode. I promise to return before Happy-Handsome." "My daughter", answered the older woman, "think of your husband's grief if he returned and did not find you. He would blame me for having given you permission."

Here the old woman interrupted, saying: "I promise that we will make a quick round of the sacred places, without stopping to sit down, and that I will bring her back in no time at all." So Happy-Handsome's mother gave her consent with a sigh.

The old woman led forth Happy-Fair and conducted her to a lonely pavilion in the palace garden. There she left her alone and went to inform the governor of what she had done. He hurried to the building and halted, thunderstruck upon the threshold by the beauty of his captive.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

HAPPY-FAIR, seeing a strange man enter the place, veiled her face and burst into sobs, as she looked round in vain for a way of escape. As the old woman did not come back, she suddenly realised her perfidy and called to mind certain words of the good door-keeper concerning the guileful eyes of the pretended saint.

As soon as the governor had satisfied himself that it was really Happy-Fair, he shut the door upon her and gave rapid orders. He

wrote a letter to the Khalifah Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān and intrusted the letter and the girl to the commander of his guards, bidding him set out immediately for Damascus. The soldier forcibly placed Happy-Fair in front of him on a fast dromedary and rode off, followed by a few slaves. Throughout all the journey Happy-Fair hid her face in her veil and sobbed silently, paying no attention to the pace, to halts or departures, and replying with neither word nor sign to her conductor. As soon as they reached Damascus, the latter left the slave and the letter with the chief chamberlain of the palace, took a receipt, and returned to Kūfah.

Next morning the Khalifah entered the harīm and told his wife and sister of the arrival of the new slave, saying: "The governor of Kūfah has sent her as a present; he informs me that he bought her from certain merchants and that she is a king's daughter whom they abducted in some far country." "Allāh increase your joy!" answered his wife. "What is her name? Is she brown or white?" asked his sister. "I have not yet seen her", said the Khalifah.

The King's sister, whose name was Dahia, hastened to the apartment where the girl had been lodged, and found her bent in an attitude of dejection, her face burnt by the sun and glistening with tears. Being of a tender heart, she leaned over the child, saying: "Why do you weep, my sister? Do you not know that you will be safe here and that life will be easy for you? What better fate could you have hoped for than that which brought you to the Commander of the Faithful?" Happy-Fair raised her eyes, saying: "My mistress, since this is the palace of the Commander of the Faithful, in what city am I?" "In Damascus. Did you not know that?" answered Dahia. "Did not the merchant tell you that he had sold you to be a gift to the Khalifah Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān? You are now the property of my brother the King; therefore dry your eyes and tell me your name." "O my mistress, in my own country I am called Happy-Fair", answered the young woman through her sobs.

Just as she was speaking, the Khalifah entered and, coming towards her with a kind smile, sat down by her side, saying: "Lift your veil, young girl." But instead of doing so, Happy-Fair drew her robe round her with a trembling hand. The King did not wish to take offence at so strange an action, so he said to his sister: "I leave this child in your charge and hope that in a few days you will have made her accustomed to you and persuaded her to be less timid." He threw a glance at Happy-Fair and could see nothing of her save the joints of her tender wrists; yet he loved her hotly, for wrists so beautiful had need belong to an exquisite body. But though he was inflamed with passion, he departed.

Dahia led Happy-Fair to the palace hammām and, after she had bathed, dressed her in delightful robes, and sprinkled pearls and diamonds among her hair. All that day she kept company with her, but the girl, being confused by her attentions, continued to weep and would not tell her the cause of her weeping. The poor captive imagined that nothing she could say would change her destiny, and therefore consumed her own grief day and night, until she fell seriously ill and the best medical science of Damascus despaired of her life.

Happy-Handsome, the son of Spring, returned on that first evening to his house and threw himself on the couch, calling: "O Happy-Fair!" As no one answered, he sprang to his feet and called a second time: "O Happy-Fair!" No one dared enter to him, for all the slaves had hidden. Therefore he hurried to his mother and, finding her thoughtful and dejected with her chin in her hand, asked anxiously: "Where is Happy-Fair?"

His mother burst into tears, stammering: "Allāh protect us, my child! Happy-Fair asked my permission to go out with the old lady to visit some sacred walī who performs miracles; she has not yet returned. O my son, my heart has never been at ease since that hag came into our house. Our door-keeper, the good old man who brought us all up, never could regard her without suspicion; and I

myself have always had a presentiment that she would bring misfortune upon us with her overlong prayers and sidelong glances." Happy-Handsome interrupted his mother, saying: "When exactly did she go out?" "Early this morning, soon after you left for the market", she answered, and the youth cried: "You see what comes of changing our habits and giving liberty to women when they do not know how to use it! Oh, why did you let her go out? Who knows, she may have lost herself, or fallen into the water, or stood under some minaret while it was falling. I shall go to the governor and make him undertake an immediate search."

Beside himself with grief, Happy-Handsome ran to the palace and was received without delay, because of the respect in which his father was held by the governor. Neglecting all formal greeting, he cried: "My slave disappeared from my house this morning, in company of an old woman to whom we have given lodging. I pray you to help me find her." The governor adopted a tone of the greatest interest, and answered: "Certainly, certainly, my dear boy; there is nothing that I would not do for the son of so worthy a father. Go to my chief of police and tell him your trouble; he is a clever and experienced man; he is certain to be able to find your slave in a few days."

Happy-Handsome hastened into the presence of the chief of police, and said: "The governor sent me to you, that you may find a slave who has disappeared from my house." The chief of police, who was sitting upon his carpet with his left leg crossed over his right, blew through his mouth two or three times, and then asked: "With whom did she go away?" "With an old woman whose distinguishing marks are such and such", answered Happy-Handsome. "She is dressed in drugget and has a large chaplet of many beads about her neck." Then said the chief of police: "As Allāh lives, tell me where the old woman is and I will find your slave for you." "But how do I know where the old woman is?" cried the distracted youth. "Would I come here if I knew?" The

chief of police changed the position of his legs, crossing the right over the left, and said: "My son, only Allāh can search out the invisible!" "By the Prophet!" cried Happy-Handsome angrily, "I shall hold you responsible. If necessary I shall tell the governor, even the Khalifah of the attitude which you adopt." "You can do what seems good to you", answered the other. "I never learned sorcery, therefore I cannot find out hidden things."

The unhappy son of Spring returned to the governor, saying: "I went to the chief of police and such and such happened." "Impossible!" exclaimed the official. "You there, my guards! Bring that son of a dog to me at once!" When the chief of police appeared before him, he said: "I order you to make the very closest search for the slave of this young man, who is the son of the merchant Spring. Send horsemen in all directions, set off yourself and look everywhere; you must find her at any cost." At the same time he gave the man a wink which signified: "Do not stir in this matter." Then he turned to Happy-Handsome, saying: "My son, I trust that it will be through me alone that you get back your slave. If by any extraordinary chance she be not found, I myself will give you ten virgins exactly as old as the hūris, with firm breasts and buttocks like stone cubes. Also I shall make this chief of police give you ten of his slaves as virgin as my eye. Calm yourself now, and remember that Destiny will ever render to you what is intended for you and, on the other hand, that you will never receive anything which was not destined for you."

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

**H**APPY HANDSOME took leave of the governor and returned in despair to his house, after wandering about the city all night in search of Happy-Fair. In the morning

he had to take to his bed with a weakness and fever, which increased day after day in measure as his faith in the researches decreed by the governor lessened. The doctors who were consulted decided that there was no cure for him except the return of his wife.

About this time there arrived in the city of Kūfah a Persian, who was a past master in the art of medicine, chemistry, the science of the stars, and sand divination. Called by the merchant Spring to the bedside of his son with many honourable promises and compliments, this learned man felt the boy's pulse, looked in his face, and then turned with a smile to the merchant Spring, saying: "The illness lies in his heart." "As Allāh lives, you speak truly!" cried the merchant, and the sage continued: "And it is caused by the disappearance of some loved one. I will soon tell you, by the aid of my mysterious powers, the place in which this person is to be found."

With that the Persian squatted on the floor and sprinkled a packet of sand in front of him; in the middle of the sand he placed five white pebbles and three black pebbles, two sticks and a tiger's claw; these he arranged on one plane, on two planes, then on three planes; and, after murmuring some words in the Persian tongue, said: "All you who hear me, know that the person is to be found at Basrah. . . . No, no, these three rivers mislead me; she is to be found at Damascus, in the King's palace, and she is in the same state of debility as this young man."

"What must we do, O venerable doctor?" cried the merchant. "Help us in this, and you will have no cause to complain that avarice abides here. As Allāh lives, I will give you enough money to live opulently for three lives." "Calm your spirits", answered the Persian, "let quiet eyelids cover quiet eyes. I undertake to bring these two young people together; the matter is much easier than you suppose. Give me four thousand dīnārs." The merchant undid his belt and handed five thousand to the Persian, who said: "Now

that I have enough for all expenses, I will set out immediately for Damascus and take your son with me. If Allāh wills, we shall return with the one he loves." Then he turned to the boy on the bed, saying: "O honourable son of the merchant Spring, what is your name?" "Happy-Handsome", replied the other, and the sage continued: "Well then, Happy-Handsome, rise up and let your soul be at peace; you may look upon your slave as already returned to you." The humours of the youth were stirred by the good influence of the doctor, so that he sat up, while the other said: "Be of good cheer; eat, drink, and sleep. In a week, when your strength has returned, I will come back for you and carry you with me." With that he took leave of father and son, and went away to make preparations for the journey.

The merchant gave his son five thousand dīnārs, bought him camels which he charged with rich merchandise and pleasantly coloured Kūfah silks, and provided him with horses. At the end of a week the boy had become well enough to travel; he said farewell to his father and mother, to Prosperity and the old door-keeper, and set out with the Persian sage, followed by the prayers of the whole household.

You must know that by this time Happy-Handsome had reached the perfection of adolescence; seventeen years had left their light touches on the carnation of his cheeks in a powder of down; all who beheld him stopped suddenly short with a feeling of ecstasy. It was not long before the Persian doctor came under the boy's delicious spell and loved him with all his heart; therefore he deprived himself of any luxury upon the journey which might add to his companion's comfort, and took great pleasure when the lad was pleased.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.



*But when the night had come, she said:*

UNDER these conditions the journey passed pleasantly, and the two travellers arrived in health and safety at Damascus. At once the Persian sage went with Happy-Handsome to the principal market and hired a large shop, which he caused to be redecorated and fitted with velvet-covered shelves. On these he arranged with careful art his precious flasks, his salves, his balms, his powders, his syrups held in crystal, his fine theriacs contained in pure gold, his pots of Persian porcelain which shone with a glaze of silver and held to ripen old pomades made up of the sap of three hundred rare kinds of herb. Among the greater jars, retorts and alembics, he gave a place of honour to his golden astrolabe.

He dressed himself in the full robes of his profession and bound his head with a turban of seven folds. Then he clothed Happy-Handsome in a blue silk shirt with a cashmere jacket, and fastened about his waist a rose silk apron worked with threads of gold, that he might stand by his side as an assistant, fill prescriptions, pound drugs in the mortar, make little bags of scent, and write magic cures to his dictation. When all was ready, he said to the youth: "From this moment you must call me father and I will call you son, as we do not wish the inhabitants of Damascus to think we practise you know what." As soon as the shop was open, the people crowded to it, some with diseases, some to see for themselves the beauty of the assistant; and all were stricken with a happy surprise to hear the boy converse with the sage in the Persian tongue, which seemed to them beautiful enough on such lips. But the thing which caused the greatest amazement throughout the city was the way in which the wise man could diagnose diseases.

He would look at the whites of the patient's eyes for a few moments and then hold out a great crystal bowl towards him, saying: "Piss!" The sick man would piss in the bowl, and the

Persian, lifting it to the height of his eyes, would say, after a moment's examination: "You have such and such disease." The patient never failed to cry: "As Allāh lives that is so!" and then all who were by would lift their arms, crying: "Yā Allāh, what a prodigy of learning! We have never heard tell of the like! We cannot see diseases in our piss."

With such a beginning it is hardly to be wondered that the fame of the Persian came in a few days to the ears of the Khalifah and his sister Dahīa. One day, as the sage was sitting in his shop dictating a prescription to Happy-Handsome, who stood pen in hand by his side, a noble-looking old woman, mounted upon an ass whose saddle was of red brocade starred with diamonds, stopped at the door, knotted the bridle of her mount to the copper ring on the pommel, and signed to the physician to help her dismount. He rose quickly and, taking her hand, helped her from the ass and led her into the shop, where he begged her be seated, while Happy-Handsome brought forward a cushion with one of his discreetest smiles.

The old woman took a flask filled with urine from the folds of her robe and handed it to the doctor, saying: "Is it not you, venerable old man, who have come from Irāk to perform wonderful cures in our city of Damascus?" "Your slave is even such as you describe", answered the sage, and the old woman continued: "None is a slave save of Allāh! Sublime master of the sciences, this flask contains you know what; it was made by the virgin favourite of our lord, the Commander of the Faithful. Our own doctors could not determine the illness which has kept her to her bed since the first day of her arrival at the palace; therefore lady Dahīa, sister of the King, has sent you this that you may discover the disease." "Mistress", answered the old man, "I must know the name of this patient, otherwise I cannot calculate an auspicious hour for her to drink my cures." "Her name is Happy-Fair", answered the royal messenger.

The sage began to trace row after row of figures upon a piece of

paper which he held on his hand, some in red ink, others in green ink; then he added up the red figures and the green figures and did something with the totals, saying: "Mistress, I have discovered the disease. It goes by the name of Trembling of the Fans of the Heart." "As Allāh lives, that is so!" cried the woman, "for we can hear the fans trembling in her heart." "Before I can prescribe for her", continued the physician, "I must know the land from which she comes. That is very important, for I must needs determine the lightness or heaviness of the air in its influence upon the fans. Also that I may ascertain the state of preservation of those delicate organs, I must know how long she has been in Damascus and her exact age." "It appears that she was brought up in Kūfah, a city of Irāk", replied the woman. "She is sixteen years of age, I know, for she told me that she was born in the year of the fire of Kūfah market. She has only been a few weeks in Damascus."

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

THE Persian doctor turned to Happy-Handsome, whose heart was beating like a mill, and said: "Prepare such and such remedies, good fellow, after article seven of the formula of ibn Sīnā."

The woman looked at the boy who was thus addressed, saying: "As Allāh lives, my child, she who is ill is very like you; her face is beautiful and agreeable in the same way as yours. . . . Tell me, noble Persian, is this your son or your slave?" "My son and your slave", answered the sage, and the old woman, charmed with this flattery, continued: "In truth, I do not know which to admire more, your science or your son." She went on conversing with the physician while Happy-Handsome put up the cures in small packets and arranged these in a box, into which he also slipped a note telling

Happy-Fair of his arrival in Damascus. He sealed the box and wrote his name and address on the cover in Kūfic character, which the people of Damascus could not read and his dear slave could. The old woman took the box, placed ten dinārs of gold upon the doctor's desk and, bidding farewell to this obliging couple, hurried to the palace.

Finding the eyes of the sick girl half-shut and moistened at the corners with tears, she went up to her, saying: "Dear child, may these cures do you as much good as he who prepared them gave me pleasure! He is a youth as fair as an angel and the shop is a place of delights. Here is the box." Happy-Fair, not wishing to offend the old woman, stretched out her hand for the box and threw a careless glance upon the cover; suddenly all the colour of her cheeks changed, for she saw these words traced in Kūfic character: "I am Happy-Handsome, son of the merchant Spring of Kūfah." Calling together all her strength so as not to faint or betray herself, she asked smiling: "What like was this fair youth of yours?" "He is such a mingling of all delights", said the other, "that I could not possibly describe him. He has eyes! He has eyebrows! Yā Allāh! But the very soul melts at a beauty-spot on the left corner of his mouth, and a dimple which appears on his right cheek when he smiles."

At this description Happy-Fair recognised her dear lover beyond any doubt. "Since that is so, may his face be a good augury for my cure", she said. She took the contents of the packets and swallowed them immediately; as she did so, she saw the note, opened it and read it. Straightway she jumped to the bottom of her bed, crying: "Good mother, I feel that I am cured! These drugs are miraculous! O happy day!" "As Allāh lives, this comes by His blessing", exclaimed the old woman, and Happy-Fair continued: "I pray you to bring me something to eat and drink, for I am dying of hunger after my thirty days' fast."

The old woman served Happy-Fair with trays of roast meats,

fruits, and drinks, and then hurried to the Khalifah to tell him that his young slave had been cured by the unheard-of learning of the Persian sage. "Carry him at once these thousand dinārs", said the Khalifah, and the old woman hastened to do as she was told. First she returned to Happy-Fair, who gave her a present for the doctor in a sealed box, and then ran to the shop, where she gave the thousand dinārs to the sage and the box to Happy-Handsome. The youth opened his present and saw within it a letter which described the abduction of his beloved by order of the governor of Kūfah and her transmission to the Khalifah. He burst out sobbing and fell into a swoon.

"Why does your son weep and faint?" asked the old woman, and the Persian replied: "How could it be otherwise, when the slave I have cured belongs to this boy whom you deem my son, but who is no other than the son of the illustrious merchant Spring of Kūfah. We came to Damascus for the sole purpose of looking for the young girl, who was raped from her home one day by a wicked old woman with treacherous eyes. Now, dear mother, we place our dearest hopes in your benevolence and beg that you will help us to recover this most precious of possessions. As an earnest of our thanks, here are the thousand dinārs which the Khalifah sent to me. You can count on further gratitude in the future."

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

THE good old woman helped the sage to recover Happy-Handsome, saying: "You may count on my good will and devotion." Without further delay she left the shop and returned to Happy-Fair, whom she found brilliant with joy and health. "My daughter", she said smiling, "why did you not trust your mother from the beginning? I would never have blamed

you for shedding so many tears at being separated from that delightful Happy-Handsome." Seeing the girl's surprise, she hastened to add: "My child, you can rely absolutely on my discretion and maternal good-will towards you. I swear to return you to your lover, even if I risk my life in doing so. Put aside all anxiety and let the old woman act according to her cunning."

She left Happy-Fair, who had kissed her hands and wetted them with tears of joy, and, after making up a packet of female garments, jewelry and articles of toilet, went out again to the sage's shop and signed to Happy-Handsome to go apart with her. The youth led her behind a curtain at the back of the shop, and heartily approved the plan which she unfolded to him.

She helped him to dress as a woman, lengthening his eyes with kohl and increasing the mole on his cheek with a black pigment; then she put bracelets upon his wrists and jewels among his hair beneath its Mosul veil. She cast a last glance upon her handiwork and found the boy more ravishing than all the women of the palace put together. "Blessed be Allāh in His works!" she said. "Now you must walk as a young virgin walks, with little steps, bringing the right hip forward and the left hip back, and making small learned wiggles with your bottom. Practise awhile before we go forth."

Happy-Handsome practised these things in the shop and acquitted himself so well that the old woman cried: "As Allāh lives, women need not be so proud in future; the bottom moves marvellously and the hips superbly! Now, that nothing shall be lacking, you must give your face a more languorous expression, thrusting your neck a little forward and looking out of the corners of your eyes. There, that is perfect; you can follow me."

When they got to the door of the harīm, the chief eunuch stepped forward, saying: "No stranger may enter without a special order from the Commander of the Faithful. Either retire with this girl or go in without her." "What has become of your wisdom, O crown of eunuchs?" cried the old woman. "You, who were ever urbanity

itself, now adopt a tone which ill matches with your delightful face. O nobly-mannered man, this slave is the property of the Lady Dahīa, sister of our Khalīfah, and if she hears of your lack of courtesy towards her favourite I am afraid she will have you decapitated, or at least thrown from office. I regret to have to confess that it will be your own fault." Then, turning to Happy-Handsome, she said: "Come, good slave, forget the rudeness of our worthy master, and above all say nothing about it to your mistress. Come!" She took him by the hand and led him through the door, while he thrust his head forward from left to right in an enticing manner, and threw an eye-smile to the chief eunuch, who shook his head and let them pass.

As soon as they were in the court of the harīm, the old woman said to Happy-Handsome: "My son, we have reserved a room for you in the harīm itself, and from this point you must go to it alone. The way is quite simple; go through that door, take the gallery in front of you, turn to the left, then to the right, then again to the right, count five doors and open the sixth. That will be your room, and I will send Happy-Fair to join you there. After the two of you have met, I will myself help you to leave the palace without being noticed by the guards or eunuchs."

Happy-Handsome entered the gallery and, in his exaltation, forgot which hand was which; he first turned to the right, then to the left into a parallel corridor, and entered the door of the sixth chamber which he found there.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

HE found himself in a lofty hall, topped by a narrow dome whose interior was ornamented by verses written out in gold with a thousand interlacing lines. The

walls were covered with rose silk, the windows curtained with gauze, and the floor spread with immense carpets of Hind. Cups of fruit were set on stools, and on the carpets themselves were ranged platters covered with silk but teeming with suggestion, both in form and odour, that here were famous pastries meet for the tenderest throats, such as only the art of Damascus can confect with entire sympathy.

Now Happy-Handsome was far from suspecting that this hall held unknown powers for him.

The only visible furnishing was a velvet-covered throne, so the youth, who did not dare to retreat in case he should be found wandering about the corridors, seated himself on this throne and waited his Destiny.

He had not been there long before a noise of silks reached his ears, and he saw a young woman with a royal look enter by one of the side doors. She was dressed only in house garments, so that her face and hair might be seen; and was followed by a delicious little slave with naked feet, who was crowned with flowers and carried a lute of sycamore-wood in her hand. This woman was none other than the lady Dahîa, own sister to the Commander of the Faithful.

When she saw a veiled woman sitting upon the throne, she went towards her softly, saying: "Who are you, stranger? And why do you sit thus veiled in the harîm where no unlawful eye may see you?" Happy-Handsome rose precipitately to his feet and, as he dared not speak, pretended to be dumb. "Why do you not answer, girl with beautiful eyes?" asked Dahîa. "If you are by any chance some slave sent back from the palace by my brother, tell me so and I will intercede for you. He refuses me nothing." Happy-Handsome remained silent; so Dahîa, thinking that the unknown would not speak in the presence of the little slave, who was regarding the pair of them with round eyes, said to the child: "Go behind the door, my pretty one, and do not let any enter." When the little girl had left them, she went closer to Happy-Handsome, who was trying to



wrap himself more and more in his large veil, saying: "Tell me who you are, dear girl, and why you came to this hall which is reserved for myself and my brother. You may speak freely, for I find you charming. Your eyes are delightful. I think you are perfectly beautiful, little one." With that Dahīa, who was partial to white delicate virgins, drew the veiled figure towards her by the waist and, raising one hand to caress the breasts, undid the robe with the other. You can picture her stupefaction when she found the breast of the young girl as flat as a boy's. First she recoiled and then, returning, wished to lift up the robe altogether and to look more closely into the matter.

Seeing this movement, Happy-Handsome judged it more prudent to speak; so he carried Dahīa's hand to his lips, saying: "Mistress, I throw myself upon your kindness and beg for your protection." "I grant it already; speak on", said Dahīa, and the youth continued: "Dear mistress, I am not a girl; I am Happy-Handsome, son of the merchant Spring of Kūfah. I came here at the risk of my life to see my wife again, Happy-Fair, a slave stolen by the governor of Kūfah and sent as a present to the Commander of the Faithful. I conjure you by the life of the Prophet, compassionate lady, to pity your two slaves." With that he burst into tears.

Dahīa straightway called the little slave, saying: "Run as fast as you can, pretty one, to Happy-Fair's apartment and tell her that I wish her to come to me."

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

THEN she turned to Happy-Handsome, saying: "Be of good cheer, O youth, I have in store for you nothing but happiness."

Now, while all this had been happening, the good old woman had

gone to Happy-Fair, saying: "Follow me quickly, my child, for your beloved is in the room which I reserved for him." She led her, pale with emotion, to the place where she supposed Happy-Handsome to be, and the two were terrified not to find him. "He must be wandering about the corridors", said the old woman. "Return, my child, to your own apartment, while I go to look for him."

Just as Happy-Fair had regained her room in a state of great anxiety, the little slave came in, saying that princess Dahîa wished to speak to her. Poor Happy-Fair thought that she was indeed lost and her husband with her, and was hardly able to follow the delightful little girl with naked feet.

As soon as she came into the hall, the King's sister ran to her smiling and led her by the hand to Happy-Handsome, saying to both of them: "Here is happiness!" The two young people recognised each other and fell fainting into the arms which each stretched out.

Dahîa, with the little girl's help, sprinkled rose-water on their faces and, when they came to themselves, left them alone together. She returned in an hour and found them sitting side by side in each other's arms, their happy cheeks moistened by tears of joy and gratitude. "Now we must drink together", she said, "to celebrate your reunion, and that your happiness may last for ever." The laughing little one filled cups with rare wine and, as they drank, Dahîa said: "How you love each other, my children! Surely you must know admirable songs of love and lovers. Take this lute and sing me something, I beg. Let me hear the sound of its melodious wood!" Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair kissed the princess's hand and sang these wonderful alternate stanzas:

*I bring light flowers  
Under my veil of Kūfah silk  
And fruits still powdered with their gold.*

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*All the gold of Sūdān shines upon you,  
O well-belov'd,  
Because the sun has not ceased to kiss you.  
The velvet of Damascus  
Is woven from your past glances.*

*I come to you in the cool of the evening,  
The light air  
Stirs the blue veil of the night;  
There is a murmur of leaves and waters.*

*You are here,  
Gazelle of nights;  
My spirit dips toward your eyes  
As a white bird to the sea.*

*Come near and take these roses;  
I slip like a flower  
From the bud of my green silks.  
I am naked for you.*

*Beloved!*

*I am here,  
A young moon stealing to you through the trees,  
A summer sea  
Flown over by quick rejoicing birds.*

Hardly had the last notes of this song died away upon the lips of Happy-Fair, when the curtains parted and the Khalifah himself stepped into the hall. All three sprang to their feet and kissed the earth between his hands. He smiled at them and sat down among

them, calling to the little slave to bring wine. "We must drink together", said he, "to celebrate the recovery of Happy-Fair." Then, lifting his cup with a "For love of your eyes, my dear!" he drank slowly. As he put down his cup he noticed the veiled slave, and turned to his sister, saying: "Who is this girl whose light veil promises so much beauty?" "She is a friend who cannot bear to be separated from Happy-Fair", answered Dahīa. "They can neither eat nor drink unless they are together."

The Khalifah parted the youth's veil, starting back before the beauty of him; for Happy-Handsome had no hair upon his cheeks, but there was a very light down upon them which gave an adorable texture to their whiteness: also you must not forget the beauty-spot which smiled upon his chin.

"As Allāh lives, my sister", cried the delighted Sultān, "henceforth I take this new slave as a concubine and reserve for her, as for Happy-Fair, an apartment worthy of her beauty and a following equal to that of a lawful wife." "Indeed, my brother", answered Dahīa, "she is a morsel worthy of you. . . . It just occurs to me that I would like to tell you a tale which I read in a book written by one of our wise men." "What tale is that?" asked the Khalifah, and the lady Dahīa said. . . .

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

“O COMMANDER of the Faithful, there was once in the city of Kūfāh a youth named Happy-Handsome, son of Spring, who had a slave to wife. They loved each other, for they had been brought up together from the same cradle and had possessed each other at the moment of puberty. For years they were happy together, until an evil day came to separate them. A wicked old woman, acting as the hot hand of

Destiny, stole the slave and delivered her to the governor of the city, who sent her as a present to the King of that time.

“The son of Spring took no rest after she had gone, until he had followed her up and found her in the very harim of the King’s palace. Just as the two were congratulating each other and shedding tears of joy, the King surprised them together and, without waiting to discover the full meaning of what he saw, furiously cut off both their heads.

“The sage who wrote this tale gives no judgment upon its ending; therefore I beg you to tell me your opinion of the act of this King, and whether you would have done the same in his place.”

The Sultān Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān answered without a moment’s hesitation: “The King should not have acted so precipitately; he should have pardoned the two young people for three reasons: first, because they had long and truly loved each other; second, because they were his guests at that time; and third, because a king should always act prudently and circumspectly. I conclude, therefore, that the action of that King was unworthy of his rank.”

The lady Dahīa threw herself before her brother’s knees, crying: “O Prince of Believers, without knowing it, you have already prejudged yourself. I conjure you, by the sacred memory of our noble ancestors and our august father, to abide by that judgment in the case which I put before you.” “Rise, my sister; you may speak without fear”, answered the surprised Khalīfah. Dahīa rose and, making the two young people stand up also, said to her brother: “My lord, this beautiful and charming girl is, beneath her veil, none other than that young man Happy-Handsome, the son of Spring. Happy-Fair was brought up with him and became his wife; her ravisher was even Yūsuf al-Thafakī, governor of Kūfah. He lied when he said in his letter that he had bought her for ten thousand dinārs. I demand his punishment and the pardon of these most

excusable children. Be good to them, remembering that they are your guests, sheltered by your sacred shadow."

"It is not my custom to go back on the spoken word", said the Khalifah. "Tell me, Happy-Fair, is this in truth your master, Happy-Handsome?" "Even as my Lord says", she answered, and the Khalifah cried: "I give you back to one another."

Then he looked at Happy-Handsome, saying: "I should be interested to learn how you succeeded in reaching this place, and how you knew that your wife was in my palace." "Commander of the Faithful", replied Happy-Handsome, "listen but for a few minutes, and I will tell you all the tale." With that he related the whole adventure to the Khalifah, without omitting a single detail.

The King was astonished and, sending for the Persian sage, named him his own physician and loaded him with honours. He kept Happy-Handsome and Happy-Fair for seven days and seven nights of festivity and rejoicing in the palace, and then sent them back to Kūfah with many presents. He deposed the governor of that city and named in his stead the merchant Spring, father of Happy-Handsome. All concerned in this tale lived at the height of happiness throughout long and fortunate lives.



## THE GIRL COOL-OF-THE-EYES

*Then Shabrazād said:*

AMR IBN MASADAH tells the following tale:

One day Abū Īsā, son of Hārūn al-Rashīd, saw at the house of his cousin, Alī ibn Hishām, a young slave called Cool-of-the-Eyes, and ardently loved her. Abū Īsā took great care to hide the secret of his love and, at the same time, tried hard by indirect hints to persuade Alī to sell him the slave. Seeing at last that his efforts were useless, he decided to change his tactics; therefore he sought his brother, the Khalīfah al-Mamūn, son of Hārūn al-Rashīd, and begged his company for a surprise visit to Alī. The Khalīfah consented, and the two men rode to Alī's palace.

When Alī saw them, he kissed the earth between the Khalīfah's hands and, having his feast-hall opened, led his two visitors into it. They found it to be a fair place, built with walls and pillars of contrasting marbles, having incrustations in the Greek style which is very pleasant to the eye, and the floor covered with Indian matting surmounted by a single piece of Basrah carpet, which occupied the whole area of the hall. After casting a quick glance of appreciation over floor, walls and ceiling, al-Mamūn said: "Well, Alī, why do you not give us something to eat?" At once Alī clapped his hands, and a multitude of slaves entered, bearing a thousand kinds of chicken and pigeons and roast birds, hot and cold. There was every sort of liquid and solid meat, but especially there was game stuffed with almonds and raisins; for al-Mamūn was enormously fond of game, and particularly if it were so stuffed. When the eating was finished, an astonishing wine, pressed from grapes chosen globe by globe, matured with perfumed fruits and scented edible nuts, was served in cups of gold and silver and crystal by young beautiful boys. These were dressed in floating Alexandrian draperies with silver borders; they sprinkled the guests with



musked rose water from diamond sprays while plying them with the wine.

The Khalifah was so delighted with all this that he kissed his host, saying: "As Allāh lives, O Alī, you shall not henceforth be called Alī, but Father-of-Beauty!" Then Alī ibn Hishām, who ever since then was known as Father-of-Beauty, made a sign to his chamberlain. At once a curtain was lifted at the end of the hall and there appeared ten young singers dressed in black silk, as beautiful as a bed of flowers. They came forward and sat on gold chairs, which ten black slaves had circled round the hall. Preluding with absolute mastery upon their stringed instruments, they sang in chorus an ode of love. Al-Mamūn, fixing his eyes upon that one whose beauty had moved him most, asked her her name. "I am called Harmony, O Commander of the Faithful", she answered, and he continued: "You are worthy of your name, O Harmony. I wish to hear you sing alone." Then Harmony tuned her lute and sang:

*My tenderness  
Has fears  
Of eyes,  
My slenderness  
Distrusts  
Its enemies,  
But when love nears  
I melt  
Into his lusts.  
He goes  
And I have felt,  
Ah, over well,  
What the gazelle  
Among  
Her slaughtered young  
Untimely knows.*

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Al-Mamūn called out delightedly: "You have indeed excelled, O girl! Who made that song?" "It was written by Amr ibn Maadi Karib al-Zubaidī, and the music is by Maabid", answered the singer, and the Khalifah emptied the cup which he held, while Abū Īsā and Alī did the same. As they were putting down their empty cups, ten new singers, dressed in blue silk and scarfed with Yaman gold brocade, took the places of the others and skilfully rendered a combined prelude. The Khalifah fixed his eyes on one of them who was like rock crystal, and asked her name. "I am called Wild-Roe, O Commander of the Faithful", she replied. Then he said: "Sing us something, Wild-Roe."

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

**T**HEN she who was called  
Wild-Roe tuned her lute and sang:

*Free girls of cheer  
Who smile  
At all affront,  
Wild Mecca deer  
Which man  
Is not allowed to hunt,  
The evil-minded can  
Of wanton guile  
Accuse us  
Because our eyes  
Are weary full,  
But beautiful  
Replies  
Excuse us,*

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*Though the lewd gestic  
Below our vests  
Make righteous men abuse us.*

Al-Mamūn, finding this song delicious, asked the girl whom it was by. "The words are by Jarīr", she answered, "and the music by Suraij." Then the Khalifah and the two others emptied their cups, while the singers retired and were replaced by ten others, clothed in scarlet silk and girt with scarlet scarves; so that, with heavy hair falling down their backs, they had the appearance of red rocks overflowed by waves at night. They sat on the gold chairs and sang in chorus, each to her lute. When they had finished, al-Mamūn turned to the fairest of them, asking her name. "I am called Seduction, O Commander of the Faithful", she said. "Let us hear your voice by itself, O Seduction!" said the Khalifah, and Seduction sang:

*A girl is not afraid  
Of jewels red  
Or white,  
Or silk brocade;  
Each night,  
Each morning on her bed  
These dyes  
Do stand confessed,  
Her lips, her eyes,  
Her rest.*

"Who wrote that poem, O Seduction?" asked the enraptured Khalifah, and she replied: "Adī ibn Zaid wrote it to a very old air." Al-Mamūn and the two others emptied their cups, and ten new singers, dressed in gold and cinctured with gold, took the place of the others and sang. The Khalifah asked the name of the

GIRL COOL-OF-THE-EYES

slimmest, and she answered: "I am called Sparkle-of-Dew." "Sing to us, Sparkle-of-Dew", he said, and at once she sang:

*I sipped the rose-wine of his cheek  
And, having drunken hard  
Of so much sweet,  
Dressed only in a perfumed shift  
Of aromatic nard,  
Ran out, oh, mad, to lift  
Our love song in the street,  
Dressed only in a perfumed shift  
Of aromatic nard.*

"As Allāh lives, you have excelled, O Sparkle-of-Dew!" cried the Khalifah. "Repeat the last phrase of your song again." So she sang with even more feeling:

*Ran out, oh, mad, to lift  
Our love song in the street,  
Dressed only in a perfumed shift  
Of aromatic nard.*

Then said the Khalifah: "Who wrote that song, O Sparkle-of-Dew?" "Abū Nuwās wrote it, Commander of the Faithful", she answered, "and the music is by Ishāk of Mosul."

When these ten slaves had finished their entertainment, the Khalifah wished to be gone, but Ali said to him: "O Commander of the Faithful, I have still one more slave. She cost me ten thousand dinārs, and I would show her to the Khalifah if he should deign to stay a few minutes longer. If she pleases him, he will be able to keep her for his own; if she does not please him, I will alter my thoughts of her." "Show me the girl", said al-Mamūn, and there appeared a young woman slave of more than mortal beauty, swaying and

slim as the branch of a palm, with eyes of Babylonian enchantment, brows of a true curve, and a colour borrowed from the jasmine. She had a gold circlet round her forehead, on which these words were picked out in diamonds:

*Who but a Jinn-taught girl would know  
To shoot a shaft from a cordless bow?*

The child came forward slowly and sat down smiling on one of the gold chairs; but no sooner had Abū Isā seen her than he let fall his cup and so violently changed colour that al-Mamūn noticed, and asked: "What is the matter, my brother?" "O Commander of the Faithful", answered Abū Isā, "it was but a twinge of the liver pain which I get sometimes." Then said the Khalifah: "Do you by any chance know this girl? Have you seen her before?" "O Commander of the Faithful", answered Abū, "who does not know the moon?" "What is your name?" asked al-Mamūn of the girl, and she answered: "Cool-of-the-Eyes, O Commander of the Faithful." "Sing us something, Cool-of-the-Eyes", he said, and she sang:

*O my own,  
O my lad so young,  
With red love on his tongue  
And a heart of stone!  
They say to be near  
Cures love,  
But I fear  
That cure will prove  
As useless as the other they essay,  
To be away.*

Marvelling at her voice, the Khalifah asked her who had written the song. No sooner had she answered that the words were by

GIRL COOL-OF-THE-EYES

al-Khuzāi and the air by Zurzūr, than Abū Īsā, in a trembling voice, said to his brother: "Allow me to answer that song, Commander of the Faithful." The Khalīfah gave leave, and Abū Īsā sang:

*Beneath these robes of mine  
Hardly a body but rather a weight of love!  
If I'll not let it rise  
Into my eyes  
It is because I would not shame the shine  
Of slim and silver moons above.*

When Alī, Father-of-Beauty, heard this answer, he understood that Abū Īsā was lost in love to the slave Cool-of-the-Eyes; therefore he rose and, bowing before Abū Īsā, said: "Dear guest, a wish shall never be framed, even in thought, within my house, without being satisfied at once. If the Khalīfah will allow me to make an offer in his presence, Cool-of-the-Eyes is yours." The Khalīfah gave his sanction and Abū Īsā led away the girl.

Such was the extraordinary generosity of Alī and the men of his time! May Allāh have them all in His keeping!



## THE TALE OF ROSE-IN-THE-BUD AND WORLD'S-DELIGHT

*And Shabrazād said to King Shāhryār:*

It is related that there was once, in the antiquity of time and the passing of the ages, a powerful and glorious king who had a wazīr named Ibrāhīm. Ibrāhīm had a daughter who was the marvel of all grace and beauty, and added to a perfection of carriage and sweetness of behaviour a most unusual intelligence. She loved the joy of friends and the gaiety of wine, fair faces, rare verse, and any tales of wonder. The delicacy of her perfection turned every head and heart; a poet of that time said of her:

*I also lie in the snare  
Of this fair huntress of the Turks,  
Who, being learned in the sages' works,  
Once said, before I was aware:  
"Although my article is accusative  
Your verb will not rise up and govern it."  
What answer could I give  
To so much wit?  
"The rules have been revised of late", I said,  
"If you consent  
I'll show you without fail  
That now the head  
Of my most weighty argument  
Comes at the finish of my long-drawn tail."*

This sweet and beautiful girl was called Rose-in-the-Bud.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.



*But when the night had come, she said:*

THE King, who delighted to have her by his side at every feast, both for her wit and her beauty, was used each year to hold a festival and to profit by the presence in his palace of the chief persons of his kingdom to play at ball with them.

One day, as the King's guests were playing at ball and Rose-in-the-Bud was seated at her window watching the game, the contest became suddenly fast and furious, and the wazir's daughter, observing with more attention, noticed among the players a young man of infinite beauty, with smiling teeth, slim waist, and mighty shoulders. She took such pleasure from the sight of him that she could not prevent herself, but favoured him with long glances. At last she called her nurse, saying: "Do you know the name of that exquisite and distinguished youth?" "They are all so beautiful, my child", answered the nurse. "I do not see the one you mean." "I will point him out", said Rose-in-the-Bud, and at once, taking up an apple, she threw it at the young man, who thereupon turned round and looked up at the window. He saw Rose-in-the-Bud, smiling and fair like the moon journeying through a dark space of the night, and in that second, even before he could lower his eyes, he fell in love. As he murmured to himself these lines of the poet:

*An arrow's hum,  
Surprise,  
A wound, abasement!  
Bowmen  
Or eyes?  
Or did it come  
From foemen  
Or a casement?*

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Rose-in-the-Bud turned to her nurse and said: "Now can you tell me his name?" "He is called World's-Delight", answered the nurse. The young girl shook her head with pleasurable emotion at these words and, falling back upon her couch, moaned to herself and improvised these verses:

*Son of a wise father,  
For he called you World's-Delight,  
O rising of the full moon  
Upon our dark!  
God drew the oval of your eyes  
With night  
On His white dawn.  
O strength,  
Reeds in the wind are clumsy  
For I have seen you.*

When she had made this poem, Rose-in-the-Bud took a sheet of paper and carefully wrote it; then she folded the paper and placed it in a little bag of embroidered silk which she hid beneath the cushion of her couch.

The old nurse, who had seen these signs of love in the girl, talked to her of one thing and of another until Rose-in-the-Bud fell asleep; not till then did she take the paper from below the cushion, read it and, after determining the depth of her mistress's passion, put it back in the same place. When the girl woke, the old woman said to her: "My child, I am your best and tenderest adviser; therefore I tell you that the passion of love is a violent passion, melting a heart of steel and bringing sorrow and sickness to the body. But if the sufferer opens her heart to another the hurt is lessened."

"O nurse", answered Rose-in-the-Bud, "do you know the cure for love?" "I do", replied the old woman, "it is to enjoy the

lover.” “How can that enjoyment be obtained?” asked the girl, and the nurse continued: “The first thing to do is to exchange gentle letters, filled with salutation and compliment; that begins to bring two friends together and is the first step in cutting knots and avoiding complications. If you have anything hidden in your heart, do not fear to tell me; for I can keep a secret, and you will never find anyone more ready to satisfy your least desires with eyes and head, and most discreetly to carry letters.”

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

ROSE-IN-THE-BUD felt her reason totter for very joy; but she was careful not to betray her feelings. “No one knows my secret yet”, she said to herself. “It will be better not to tell this woman until I have had certain proof that he loves me.” But as this thought was passing through her mind, the nurse continued: “My child, last night a man appeared to me in a dream, saying: ‘Your young mistress and World’s-Delight are in love with each other, and it is fated that you must help them by carrying letters and performing discreet services; otherwise you will miss a great reward.’ I simply tell you what I saw; it is for you to decide.” “O nurse”, exclaimed the girl, “can you really keep a secret?” “Can you doubt it”, replied the other, “when I am known to be the essence of the essence of chosen hearts?” Without further hesitation the girl showed the old woman the paper on which she had written her verses and gave it her, saying: “Carry this to World’s-Delight and bring me back an answer.” At once the nurse departed and, finding World’s-Delight in his house, first kissed his hands, then made him many courteous compliments and, lastly, gave him the letter.

World’s-Delight unfolded the paper and read its contents; when

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he understood all the delicious news which it carried, he wrote these lines upon the back of the note:

*The wings of my heart beat so,  
I cannot hold them;  
He flies abroad and sings.*

*I say to my friends:  
"These tears come from a sickness of the eyes,"  
Poor heart.*

*I slept a free man on my bed,  
I waked  
And love held a silk whip above me.*

*I come telling a tale of torture  
Written with tears  
On the white sand of your pity.*

*The moon has woven a veil for you  
And the stars would pierce it;  
The palms did not know how to sway  
Until you passed.*

*Come to me,  
But that would weary you.  
I send my soul as a present,  
Come to me!*

He folded the leaf and kissed it; then he gave it to the nurse, saying: "Mother, I rely upon you to favour me with your mistress." "I hear and I obey", she answered and at once hurried back with the note.

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Rose-in-the-Bud carried the letter to her lips and to her brow before she opened and read it. When she had well understood what World's-Delight would say, she wrote beneath his poem the following answer:

*Be patient,  
You who have fallen in our nets,  
For we have no proof your heart is torn.*

*Our heart is torn,  
Also we are afraid.*

*The night of separation comes down upon us,  
But our heart is a red fire.*

*Your sleeplessness lies upon our bed,  
Our body moves restlessly  
All through the night.*

*Silence is best,  
Our veil must not be lifted  
Among your friends.*

*Ah, but our body cries for you!*

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

WHEN she had finished writing this, she again folded the paper and gave it to the nurse, who at once left the palace. But Fate willed that she should meet the wazīr's chamberlain and that he should say: "Where are you going at such an hour?" "To the hammām", she answered trembling, and went

upon her way; but her trouble had been so great that she had let fall, without noticing it, the note which had been insecurely fastened in a fold of her sash. So much for her.

The note fell to the ground near the palace door, where it was picked up by one of the eunuchs and carried at once to the wazir, who happened, after a visit to his harim, to be seated upon a couch in the reception hall. The eunuch interrupted his calm reflection by holding out the note and saying: "I found this on the ground, my lord, and hastened to bring it to you." The wazir opened the paper and, after reading the poems, made sure, by examination, that two of them were in the handwriting of his daughter, Rose-in-the-Bud.

He at once sought out his wife, the girl's mother, with tears coursing down his beard. "Why do you weep, my master?" cried the woman, and he replied: "Look at this paper." She took the note and saw at once that it was a correspondence between Rose-in-the-Bud and World's-Delight. Tears came to her eyes, but she controlled her soul and said to the wazir: "My lord, tears are useless in this matter. It were better to think of a way to safeguard your honour and hide our daughter's shame." After she had comforted her husband for some time, he said: "I fear this passion for our child! Surely you know that the Sultān is very fond of Rose-in-the-Bud? My concern is a double one: I fear for my daughter because she is my daughter and I fear for her because she is a favourite with the Sultān. What is your thought in this matter?" "Give me time to make the prayer for guidance", she answered and, placing herself in the attitude for it, went through the pious practices which the Sunnah recommends in such a case.

When she had finished her prayer, she said: "In the midst of the sea Bahr al-Kunūz there lies a mountain called the mountain of the Bereaved Mother, where none may land without great difficulty. I advise you to build a home there for our daughter."

The wazir, approving of his wife's advice, resolved to have an

inaccessible palace built upon this mountain and to confine his daughter there, with provisions for a year, to be renewed during the following years, and a troop of attendants to bear her company. He therefore called together a band of masons, carpenters and architects, and sent them to the mountain, where they built an inaccessible palace such as the eye of man had never seen.

When he received word that this was done, the wazīr provisioned a caravan for the journey and, visiting his daughter in the middle of the night, ordered her to depart. Rose-in-the-Bud was stricken with the violent pangs of separation and shed abundant tears when she reached the outside of the palace and saw that the final preparations had been made. Suddenly the idea came to her to inform World's-Delight of her violent passion, which might have melted the hardest rocks and started streams of tears, by writing the following lines upon the door:

*Here is a perfumed kiss, O house,  
For he will pass in the morning.  
I know not where I go  
On this swift journey.  
To-night the birds will sing among the leaves of pain:  
Pity, parting, pity, parting!  
But already  
I have drunk the aloed cup of Destiny,  
And there is memory in the wine.*

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

WHEN she had traced these lines on the door, she took her place in the palanquin and the caravan started. They crossed sown and desert, hill and plain, and

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came at last to the sea al-Kunūz, where they pitched their tents and set about constructing a great boat. When it was ready, they put out to sea, taking the young girl and her attendants with them.

As the wazīr had ordered the leaders of the caravan to come back across the sea when they had confined Rose-in-the-Bud in her palace, and then to destroy their boat, they hastened to fulfil his command in every particular and at last came back to him, weeping for what they had done. So much for them.

World's-Delight rose on that morning and, after making his prayer, mounted his horse and rode towards the palace to serve the Sultān. As he passed the wazīr's door, he saw the verses written upon it and nearly lost consciousness. The reading of them lit a quenchless fire in his racked entrails. He returned home, but could not stay in one place because of his wretchedness; when night came, he feared that he would reveal his secret to the folk of his house and therefore went out, all haggard and perplexed, to wander at random in the streets.

He walked all that night and through the next morning, until the great heat and his consequent thirst obliged him to rest a little. He sat down beneath a shady tree beside a little stream and lifted the water in the hollow of his hand to drink. But he found no taste or refreshment in it, for, as he leaned over the water, he saw that his face had become ravaged and yellow in a single day. Also he felt his feet much swollen by his wanderings. He wept abundantly and said these verses, while the tears coursed down his cheeks:

*I am drunken with love,  
But the cup is held to my lips  
And I must drink again.  
Why should I not wander in the ways,  
Forgetting food?  
There is no joy in all these roads,  
For I cannot meet my beloved*



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*Or one who has known my beloved  
Or one who has known one  
Who has known my beloved.*

When he had said these verses, World's-Delight wept until he had made a pool on the earth beside him; then he rose and left that place. As he was wandering in despair through plains and deserts, there appeared suddenly before him a great-maned lion with a mighty neck. Its head was as large as a dome, the stretch of its jaws more than a door, and its teeth had the appearance of elephant's tusks. Seeing this beast, World's-Delight gave himself up for lost; turning towards Mecca, he pronounced his act of Faith and prepared to die. Then he suddenly remembered that he had read in ancient books that a lion is very sensible to flattery and can easily be tamed through its delight in words. Therefore he said to the animal: "Lion of all the forests, lion of all the deserts, fearless lion, renowned chieftain of the brave, Sultān of beasts, you see before you a poor lover, worn out with separation, whose passion has brought him to the doors of death. Hear me and have compassion upon my grief."

At this speech, the lion retired a little and, sitting down on its behind, lifted its head towards World's-Delight with pleased movements of its tail and two front paws. Encouraged by these signs, World's-Delight recited the following:

*O brave tumultuous lion,  
I am no prize  
For I am thin,  
My body dies,  
O brave tumultuous lion.  
Your foes would grin  
If you ate me*

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*And say you could  
Not catch for food  
A living enemy.  
But if you have a mind  
To be unkind,  
O brave tumultuous lion,  
My body bates  
Its loneliness,  
And you would hurt me less  
Because your claws are not as sharp as Fate's,  
O brave tumultuous lion.*

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

WHEN the lion heard these lines, his eyes filled with tears. He came gently up to World's-Delight and began to lick his feet and hands. Then he signed to him to follow and set off across the desert. World's-Delight went after his guide for a long time; when they had climbed a high mountain and dropped down the other side, they came upon plain traces of the caravan. The young man hurried forward with his eyes fixed upon the track, while the lion, being assured that his friend was now going in the right direction, returned by the way he had come to mind his own concerns.

World's-Delight followed in the trace of the caravan until he came to a sea moaning with all its waves, and there he lost the tracks upon the sand. Realising that the party which he sought had taken ship from that place, he lost all hope of again seeing his mistress. With abundant tears he said over this poem to himself:

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*There are no footsteps on the sea,  
Though all the sea  
    Could not put out my heart;  
And no deep sleep  
    By any art,  
Although the sea is deep.  
Great Euphrates  
My tears' mate is,  
    I am lord of rain  
And the rivers  
    Of my pain  
Grow to greater rivers.*

*I throw the worthless coin of life  
To play with life,  
    But if I win, I cannot win;  
For my own love,  
    A traitor's sin,  
Pulls down the fort above.  
Willows growing by the streams  
Of my dreams,  
    Half a world between us,  
Would that gentle death  
    Had seen us  
In the breast of death.*

When he had made an end of these lines, he wept so long that at last unconsciousness came to him and he went into a deep swoon. As soon as he came to himself he looked to left and right and, seeing that he was in a desert, was taken with a sudden fear of savage beasts. He therefore climbed a high mountain, at the top of which he heard the sound of a human voice. Listening attentively, he came to the conclusion that the voice was that of a hermit who had left

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the world, to live a life of devotion in a cave which could be seen among the rocks. He knocked three times at the door of this cave and then, as no one came forth, sighed deeply and intoned these lines:

*How may desire win home,  
How may the soul forget,  
When all the chiefs of all the griefs  
About my head have met  
To whiten its young jet?*

*Harsh flowers fell in the wine  
Until its taste was rude;  
I fed the fire of my desire  
With bitter aloe wood  
Which grew in solitude.*

*I went to find my dear  
And found a verse instead;  
It dashed the stuff of all my love  
In ruin round my head  
And left my soul for dead.*

*Yet, loser of the world,  
If I could have my choice  
I'd choose again that life of pain  
Where living girls and boys  
May suffer and rejoice.*

As he was finishing these lines, the door of the cavern opened and he heard a voice cry: "The mercy of Allāh be upon you!"

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

HE entered the cave and wished the hermit peace. "What is your name?" asked the holy man. "I am called World's-Delight", he answered, and at once told his story from beginning to end. When it was finished, the hermit wept, saying: "O World's-Delight, I have lived in this place for twenty years without beholding a human being until yesterday. I heard the sound of tears and voices and, looking down from this mountain, saw a caravan with tents pitched upon the beach. I watched while a group of men constructed a boat and, going on board, made for the open sea. A short time afterwards some of them returned and, when they had destroyed their boat, went back across the desert. I think that those who went and did not return were the folk for whom you are looking, O World's-Delight. I understand your grief and I excuse it. There was never a lover who was not acquainted with sorrow." Then the hermit recited these lines:

*O World's-Delight, you think that I have passed  
Beyond all human sympathy at last,  
Not knowing that a touch of passion's hand  
Winds and unwinds me like a linen band.  
Even as a child I found love's worst and best,  
Drinking its fury from my mother's breast;  
I was a known practitioner of love  
When my young comrades were not old enough;  
Seeing my frenzy, older men of wit  
Used my name as a synonym for it.  
And this one thing I learned from passion's page,  
In lusty youth and in my meagre age,  
The single sin in love, for which regret  
Can in no wise atone, is to forget.*

The hermit clasped World's-Delight in his arms, and the two wept together until the mountains echoed their grief. Then they both swooned away.

When they recovered consciousness, they swore a mutual oath to be brothers in Allāh (exalted be His name!) and the hermit said: "I will pray to-night and ask for the guidance of Allāh in your affair." "I beg you to do so", answered World's-Delight. So much for them.

When Rose-in-the-Bud was taken to the mountain of the Bereaved Mother and had entered the palace prepared for her, she examined the place attentively. Finding it both fair and comfortable, she began to weep and say: "As Allāh lives, O dwelling, you have all delights save one. My lover is not here." Then as she had seen that there were many birds in the island, she ordered nets to be spread for their capture, and each one, as it was taken, to be placed in a cage within the palace.

As she leaned out of a window and gave herself up to memory, desire rose in her like a flame not to be put out by any tears. The burden of these verses came to her:

*I would out-sing the sorrows of these song-birds  
Because of love,  
But I am afraid.*

*I am burnt up  
More easily than a wooden twig,  
I am slim tinder.*

*But he cannot see this.*

*You need not be ashamed, sun of warm gold,  
To make each ray a kiss  
For my beloved;  
He is more worthy of your light  
Than any moon.*

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*Sun of warm gold,  
You have never shone on river reeds  
More fair than he.*

*Impudent roses,  
You could feign his right cheek,  
Only if you were the roses of his left.*

*The water of my beloved's mouth  
Could put out hell.*

*He is my suffering and my delight,  
He is my beloved.*

When night came down with his shadows, Rose-in-the-Bud felt her desire grow hotter and the memory of her woes flame up in agony.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

SHE cried aloud these lines:

*With night there beats a white-hot sun  
Of memory upon my bed.  
Burning,  
I lie all fire,  
Turning  
My maidenhead  
To every angle of desire  
But one.*

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*I could not say farewell that day;  
I charge you, night, to say it now,  
Seeing  
My little sleep.  
“Being  
All hot to keep  
The letter of her vow”,  
Oh, say!*

Thus Rose-in-the-Bud lamented.

When the hermit had well prayed, he said to World's-Delight: “Go down into the valley and bring me a load of palm fibres.”

World's-Delight did so, and the hermit wove them into a great net, such as is used for carrying straw. Then he said again: “In the valley there grow gourds which dry, as soon as they are ripe, and fall from their stems. Go down and fill this net with dry gourds; then throw all into the sea and climb on top; the current will bear you out and carry you to the place where you would be. May good fortune attend you!” World's-Delight bade farewell to his friend and, climbing down into the valley, made the suggested preparations.

When he was well out to sea, floating upon his net of gourds, a violent wind arose and carried him beyond the hermit's sight. For three days and three nights he was the plaything of a terrible sea, buffeted by waves, carried to the top of headlong crests, sunk into mighty gulfs, until at last Fate cast him at the foot of the mountain of the Bereaved Mother. Hungry and thirsty, he crawled up the sand, as giddy as a hen, and came in a short time to a place of running streams and fruit trees sung about by birds. Having eaten and drunken, he made his way inland and soon saw, white against the horizon, a mighty palace with steep unfriendly walls. Finding the door of it shut, he sat down in that place and did not move for three days. At the end of this time the door opened and a eunuch appeared, who asked him whence he came and what chance had



brought him to the island. "I am from Isfahān", he answered. "I was sailing the seas with my merchandise when the ship went down and the waves carried me to this shore." On hearing this, the slave wept and threw his arms about the neck of World's-Delight, saying: "Allāh preserve you, O face of friendship! Isfahān is my own country. My cousin, the daughter of my uncle, the dear love of my childhood, dwells there still. One day our tribe was attacked by a greater and I was carried off as part of the spoil. Since I was still a child, my eggs were cut off to increase my value and I was sold as a eunuch." After this the slave, with many expressions of welcome, led World's-Delight into the vast outer court of the palace.

There he saw a wonderful fountain, surrounded by trees from whose slim leafy boughs hung silver cages with gold doors. In these, birds of various kinds were singing agreeable praises to their Creator. Going up to the first cage, World's-Delight saw that it held a dove, whose cry seemed to say: "Generous! Generous!" Hearing the word, the young man fell down in a swoon; at last he recovered and, with a deep sigh, murmured this song. . . .

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

*Though you have felt your heart grow dim,  
O silver sleepy dove,  
Be not ashamed of praying,  
But tune your throat to saying:  
"O generous one!" to Him,  
For he is love.*

*But all your passion is a bird's,  
No man may surely say  
Whether the meaning  
Of your tired keening*

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*Is: "Break, my heart, in minor thirds",  
Or: "I am gay."*

As soon as he had said these lines, he wept until he swooned again. When he recovered consciousness, he went up to the second cage, which contained a wood-pigeon, who seemed ever to be singing: "Glorify Him!" The young man sighed deeply and said:

*The wood-pigeon murmurs: "Glorify Him!"  
Why should I not murmur: "Glorify Him!"  
Since I am no sadder than the wood-pigeon?  
And yet the slow honey of the voice of the wood-pigeon  
Comes not from my lips  
And the slow blood of the heart of the wood-pigeon,  
Filling the ruby,  
Is not my heart.  
If I opened the door of his cage  
The wood-pigeon would murmur: "Glorify Him!"  
Therefore why should I murmur: "Glorify Him!"?*

Then World's-Delight went up to the third cage, in which was a nightingale. Seeing a stranger the bird began to sing, and the young man answered its song, saying:

*Allah has set aside the nightingale  
To be our tears.  
Each prayer for pity  
Which, being dumb, we could not make  
In any years,  
Must agonise, make pale  
His ditty  
For our sake.*

*Allah has set aside the nightingale  
To be our prayer.*

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*The nights, which over-long  
Wore down our passion to a burning thread,  
He bears not in our tale;  
And so leans down instead  
To this bird's song  
To find them there.*

After this he went up to the fourth cage and saw within it a bulbul, which at once began to sing. With a deep sigh, World's-Delight answered the song:

*The dawn which is so pale and sweet  
Makes lovers' hearts to beat  
And the gold of noonday's heat  
Gilds her two wayward feet. . . .  
The bulbul sings this.*

*The scent of rain on garden flowers  
Stabs this desire of ours,  
Den-watered musk has powers  
Over lovers' hours. . . .  
The bulbul sings this.*

*We cannot find the needed song  
The coloured paths along,  
And the light buds among  
Are silent for love's wrong. . . .  
The bulbul sings this.*

*When she has been away  
And then brings back the day  
Her lovers kneel and say:  
We thank our hearts for May. . . .  
The bulbul sings this.*

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World's-Delight went further on until he came to a cage of such remarkable workmanship that it surpassed all the other cages put together.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

THIS cage contained a wild pigeon with a rich collar of pearls about its neck; its plaintive amorous singing, its air of sadness, so affected World's-Delight that he sobbed and said:

*Wild pigeon of the leaves,  
Brother of lovers,*

*If you have seen an arrow killing  
From far  
The mild-eyed deer  
By rills  
Of summer hills,*

*If you have heard an arrow singing  
From far  
And then strike sheer  
The wings  
Of airy things,*

*Wild pigeon of the leaves,  
You are  
Brother of lovers.*

When the pigeon heard this song, it came out of its dream, moaning and moving with so much melancholy that it seemed, in its own language, to be singing this:

*Now I remember my free flying  
And my songs for  
The brave grey breast of my mistress  
Bright in the branches.  
Men came with flutes to the forest  
But I turned to the night songs  
Of the brave grey throat of my mistress  
Bright in the branches.  
Men came with nets to the forest  
And I saw no more  
The brave grey breast of my mistress  
Bright in the branches.*

World's-Delight turned to his friend, the eunuch from Isfahān, saying: "Whose palace is this? Who built it and who lives in it?" "The wazīr of a certain king built it for his daughter, that she might be free from happening and accident", answered the eunuch. "She is confined there with a train of servants, and the inner door is only opened once a year when new provisions come for us."

"I have reached my goal", thought World's-Delight, "but, ah, how long will be the waiting!" So much for him.

Since her coming to the palace, Rose-in-the-Bud had not known the joy of eating and drinking, nor the joy of sleep. As time went by the torment of her heart increased and she would wander through the palace looking in vain for a way of escape. A day came when she could control herself no longer; bursting into tears, she murmured these lines:

*They made my torture-chamber a prison  
And my prison a torture-chamber.*

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*They heated irons  
In the fire of his absence,  
And gave me burning drugs  
Distilled from my desire.*

*Who shall break the rack  
Built from my sighing,  
Or pierce the wall  
Raised from my grief,*

*And I run drunken-footed to my love?*

Then Rose-in-the-Bud climbed up to the terrace of the palace and, by means of strong Baalbakk fabrics which she tied carefully together, let herself down the outside of the walls and reached the ground in safety. Dressed just as she was in her fairest robe, and with a collar of great diamonds about her neck, she crossed the flat desert and came to the sea shore.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

SHE saw a fisherman whom the wind had cast upon that coast, seated in his boat and fishing. The man caught sight of her at the same moment and, thinking that she was some appearance from another world, began fearfully to push off from the shore. Rose-in-the-Bud called and signed to him and, when he stayed to listen, spoke to him as follows:

*I am no ghost from the sea mist,  
Fisherman,  
But a lover burned in fire  
And never kissed.*

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*Lend me your boat to find desire,  
Fisherman,  
And I'll give pearls of the sea  
To be your hire.  
He is the absent half of me,  
Fisherman,  
And I the half on fire;  
So come to me.*

Hearing these lines, the fisherman wept, groaned, and lamented the days of his youth, when he had been conquered by love, tormented by passion, tortured by desirous dreams, and burnt in the fires of ecstasy. He answered:

*Tears were the pasture of my youth,  
A broken heart my only wear,  
I bled; I used to tell the fair  
Desire was love and love was truth.*

*Then do you wonder I am bold  
To bring these poor young lovers neal?  
If they feel half I used to feel  
I ought to get a heap of gold.*

When the fisherman had said this, he brought his boat to the shore, exclaiming: "Come into my boat and I will take you anywhere you wish." Rose-in-the-Bud accepted this invitation, and the fisherman rowed strongly away from the shore. Soon a high wind rose behind them and urged them forward till land was lost and they could know nothing of their direction. At the end of three days the storm abated, the wind fell, and Allāh (may His name be exalted!) beached their boat beside a city.

As the fisherman's boat came to ground, the King of that city,

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whose name was Dirbās, was sitting with his son at a window in his palace and looking out to sea. Perceiving in the boat a girl as beautiful as the full moon lying upon night's unclouded breast, wearing a collar of great diamonds and having magnificent rubies in her ears, he imagined that she must be some king's daughter and at once hurried down to the shore through the seaward door of his palace.

By the time he reached the boat it had been moored, and the young girl was calmly sleeping. As the King watched her she opened her eyes and began to weep. Then said he: "Whence come you? Whose daughter are you? And what is the reason of your journey?" "I am the daughter of Ibrāhīm, wazīr of King Shāmikh", she answered. "The reason of my voyage is strange, my adventure is remarkable." With that she told the King the whole of her story from beginning to end, and finished by weeping and sighing and saying:

*My lids are rotten with my tears  
And yet my love tale's wondrous beyond weeping,  
For I was never paid  
As man pays maid  
And time is keeping  
The arrears,  
O World's-Delight!*

*Your love had been to magic school,  
Your eyes were art-come-up with olden cantraps,  
Each whisper was a sin.  
Taught by the Jinn,  
Your lips were mantraps  
For the fool,  
O World's-Delight!*



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After this she told the King further details of her life and then, bursting into tears, improvised this song:

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

*Sire, sire,  
Who would have thought this thing,  
That tears could turn to fire,  
O stranger king;  
Who would have thought my mind  
Could change a tear to blood,  
O kingly, kind;  
Or who that the sea would  
A living dead girl bring  
To you, O mild, O good,  
O stranger king?*

When the King heard Rose-in-the-Bud's tale, he was convinced of the depth of her love-longing and said compassionately: "Have no fear, for you have reached your goal. I am ready to help you by bringing you to your lover." Then the King recited these lines:

*Delightful maid,  
There is no need to be afraid;  
Even to-day I have made  
A merchandise cavalcade  
And bade  
Strong riders, richly paid,  
Carry a brave parade  
Of musk and of brocade  
King Shāmikh to persuade  
To lend his aid*

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*And be the powerful shade  
In which our head is laid,  
Therefore there is no need to be afraid,  
Delightful maid.*

So saying, the King went out to his soldiers and, bidding his wazīr prepare innumerable bales of the intended presents, commanded him to set out at once and carry them to King Shāmikh. "Also", said he, "you must bring me back a young man called World's-Delight. Say to the King: 'My master seeks you for an ally and wishes the alliance to be sealed by a marriage between Rose-in-the-Bud, daughter of your wazīr, and World's-Delight, a youth in your own train. Give this young man to me and I will conduct him to King Dirbās that the contract may be drawn up in his presence.'"

Then King Dirbās wrote a letter to King Shāmikh and gave it to his wazīr with a repetition of his orders concerning World's-Delight. "If you do not bring him back", he added, "you shall be relieved of your high position." "I hear and I obey!" answered the wazīr, and at once set out for the lands of King Shāmikh.

When he arrived, he greeted King Shāmikh from King Dirbās and gave him the presents and the letter. But to his surprise, King Shāmikh shed many tears, saying: "Alas, alas, where is World's-Delight? He has disappeared and we know not where to seek him. If you can give him back to me, O wazīr, I will gladly pay double the worth of the presents which you have brought me." Then, with many groans, King Shāmikh said:

*Give him to me  
And you shall have for fee  
Blue burning diamonds from my treasury.*

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*He was the moon  
In night's blue burning noon,  
Whose simplest words were songs to a low tune,*

*My prince of palms,  
Whose branches in his calms  
Bore golden-mannered speeches like gold psalms.*

*Enough of trees,  
My child was more than these,  
Himself blue burning noon and the relenting breeze.*

Then he turned to the visiting wazīr, who had brought the presents and the letter, saying: "Return to your master and tell him that World's-Delight has been absent for more than a year and that the King, his master, does not know what has become of him." "But, my lord", the wazīr answered, "the King, my master, told me that if I did not bring back World's-Delight, I should be cast from my high office and might never again set foot in his city. How dare I return?"

King Shāmikh turned to his own wazīr, Ibrāhīm, father of Rose-in-the-Bud, saying: "Take a strong escort and accompany this envoy, helping him to seek in every place for World's-Delight." "I hear and I obey!" answered Ibrāhīm, and at once set out, accompanied by a troop of guards and the other wazīr, to seek for World's-Delight.

They journeyed for many days, and each time they met with caravans or wandering tribes they asked news of World's-Delight, saying: "Have you seen a young man of such and such an appearance?" But always the strangers would answer: "We do not know him."

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

THEY inquired through cities and villages, and hunted every plain and mountain, until they came to the sea. There they took ship and, in the course of time, saw the mountain of the Bereaved Mother rising above the waves.

Then said the wazir of King Dirbās to the wazir of King Shāmikh: "Why did that mountain receive its name?" "I will tell you", answered the other, and he said:

"Of old there was a Jinniyah, of the race of the Chinese Jinn, who met a mortal in her journeyings and learned to love him. Fearing the anger of the Jinn if the thing became known, and yet being unable to control her passion, she sought for some solitary place where she could hide her lover from the eyes of the Jinn, and at last found this unknown mountain which lay apart from the passage of men and fiends. She brought her lover through the air to this island and lived with him here, only leaving from time to time to make a necessary appearance among the Jinn. Several times she became pregnant by her lover and bore many children on the mountain. Thus it happened that merchants, who chanced to sail along this coast, would hear the children crying; as the sounds seemed very like those of a mother who had lost her young, they would say to each other: 'There must be some bereaved woman upon that mountain.' Such was the origin of the name."

This tale and the astonishment of the other wazir had brought them ashore and to the palace gate. In answer to their knocking, a eunuch came forth and, recognising his master, the wazir Ibrāhīm, father of Rose-in-the-Bud, kissed his hand and led the two newcomers into the palace.

In the courtyard, Ibrāhīm noticed among the crowd of servants a man of wretched appearance who, though the old man was far from recognising him, was none other than World's-Delight. He asked his people the meaning of the stranger's presence there, and

they answered: "He is a poor merchant who was shipwrecked on the island, after having lost all his goods at sea. There is no harm in him, for he is a saint, bound ever in the ecstasy of prayer." Without troubling further about the matter, the wazir entered the palace.

When he did not find his daughter in her apartment, he questioned the young girl slaves who were there, and they replied: "We do not know how she departed from this place. All we can say is that she did not stay long among us." Hearing this, the wazir burst into tears and improvised these lines:

*House, haunted with bird music,  
Of proud thresholds,*

*Sobbing with desire came the lover,  
Your doors were wide for him;  
We looked in gladness to discover  
Your hidden bride for him.*

*Chamberlains of luxurious lot  
Grew ruddy there;  
Brocade was everywhere,  
House, haunted with bird music,  
But she was not.*

The wazir Ibrāhīm wept again when he had made an end of these verses. "None may escape from the decrees of Allāh", he exclaimed, "nor trick the fixture of eternity!" So saying, he went up on to the terrace and found the Baalbakk fabrics, fastened by one end to the battlements and hanging down the walls. As he stood there, realising and sorrowing for the manner of his daughter's grief-guided flight, he saw two great birds, one a crow and one an owl, slowly passing the terrace. Taking their appearance for an evil omen, he sobbed and said:

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*Late have I come to the home of my dear,  
She is not here  
And, lo!  
Wheeling an owl and a crow.  
Craw, craw,  
You broke love's law;  
Cruel were you.  
To whoo, to whoo,  
To whom?  
To these poor two.  
So, so  
In the gloom  
The owl and the crow.*

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

HE came down weeping from the terrace and ordered the slaves to search the mountain for their mistress. The slaves hunted for many hours but did not find her. So much for them.

When World's-Delight heard for certain of the flight of Rose-in-the-Bud, he uttered a great cry and fell senseless to the ground. Seeing him lie there unconscious, the folk of the palace thought that he had been lifted into a divine ecstasy and that his soul was drowned in the glorious contemplation of God. So much for him.

As soon as the wazir of King Dirbās saw that Ibrāhīm had lost all hope of finding his daughter and World's-Delight, and that his heart was very low because of this, he resolved to return to the city of his King, although he had not succeeded in his mission. He made his farewells to the father of Rose-in-the-Bud, saying, as he

pointed to the poor young man on the ground: "I wish to take this saint with me, for perhaps his merits will bring blessing upon me; perhaps Allāh may soften the heart of my master, so that he does not deprive me of my office. Later I will not fail to send the holy man to Isfahān; for that city is not far from our land." "Do as seems good to you", answered Ibrāhīm.

The two wazīrs separated, each taking the road to his own country; and the wazīr of King Dirbās, though far from guessing his identity, took World's-Delight along with him, still in his swoon and mounted on a mule.

The swoon lasted for the first three days of the journey, but on the fourth day World's-Delight, who had before been ignorant of all which passed about him, recovered consciousness, murmuring: "Where am I?" A slave who was by answered: "You are travelling with the wazīr of King Dirbās", and at once ran to inform his master that the holy man had come to himself. The wazīr immediately sent his guest a draught of sugared rose-water, which brought his strength back to him. After that the journey went on and the caravan soon came to the outskirts of the city.

King Dirbās sent a message to his wazīr, saying: "If World's-Delight is not with you, beware of showing yourself before my face." The unhappy wazīr did not know what to do, for he was completely ignorant that Rose-in-the-Bud was with the King, and why the King desired to find World's-Delight, and especially that the young man who was always fainting in his company was World's-Delight. Also, you must remember that World's-Delight did not know whither he was being taken or that the wazīr had been sent out in search of him.

Recalling that World's-Delight had recovered consciousness, the wazīr went to him, saying: "O holy man of Allāh, I wish for your advice in a cruel perplexity. My master the King sent me upon a mission in which I have not succeeded; now that he knows of my return, he has warned me that I may not enter the city if I

have failed.” “What was your mission?” asked the young man and, when the wazīr had told him the whole story, he mastered his emotion and continued: “Fear nothing! Go to the King and carry me with you. I take it upon myself to bring about the return of World’s-Delight.” “Are you telling the truth?” cried the delighted wazīr, and, when the other replied that he was, the old man mounted with him on horseback and speedily sought the presence of the King.

When they were before the face of Dirbās, the Sultān cried: “Where is World’s-Delight?” For answer, the holy man advanced, saying: “O great King, I know the hiding-place of World’s-Delight.” The King signed to him to approach and, when he had done so, asked in a moved voice: “Where is that?” “Very near here”, replied the other. “But tell me first why you want him, before I hasten to place him in your hands.”

“I will gladly do so”, said the King, “but we must be alone.” He ordered his people to fall back and, taking the young man with him into an inner chamber, told him the whole story from beginning to end.

Then said World’s-Delight: “Bring me rich robes and, when I have put them on, I will instantly make World’s-Delight appear.” The King had a sumptuously ornamented garment brought to him, and World’s-Delight, when he had put it on, cried: “I, even I, am World’s-Delight, the desolation of the envious!” Piercing all hearts with the dark glances of his eyes, he improvised these lines. . . .

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

*She was a coloured shadow of delight  
Going before me in the dark of night,  
Burning my pains away.*



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*My only water-streams were tears for love,  
But they were cool and sparkling and enough  
With her to light me. Nay,  
My very self a river washing bell  
But kissing the reed bank of heaven as well  
With her to light the day.*

*But heart and head have watched together so,  
My heart, being drained of sleep, is white as snow,  
My head is like white frost;  
How may I know that the long book of grief  
Is closed at last, without the darling chief  
Young chapter being lost;  
How can I know that we may find, in truth,  
A golden youth in a gold youth of youth  
When that sweet gold were most?*

When World's-Delight had made an end of this, King Dirbās said: "As Allāh lives, I see that you each loved the other with the same sincere passion. You are two flashing stars in the sky of beauty. Your tale is a prodigy and your adventures pass the telling!" Then, when King Dirbās had told him the whole tale of Rose-in-the-Bud, the young man asked: "O King of time, where is she now?" "She is in my palace", he answered, and at once sent for the kādī and witnesses, who drew up the marriage contract for the two young people. After that Dirbās loaded World's-Delight with honour and riches, and sent a courier to tell King Shāmikh all that had happened.

King Shāmikh rejoiced exceedingly and sent a letter back to King Dirbās, saying: "As the contract has already been put in order, I greatly desire that the feast and the consummation of the marriage should take place in my palace." Also he prepared camels, horses, and a great train of attendants, which he sent to fetch the bride and bridegroom.

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When this letter and escort arrived, King Dirbās gave a great present in gold to the lovers and, after adding to their train, bade them farewell.

It was a memorable day when they arrived at Isfahān in their own country; the city had never seen so fair a day. King Shāmikh called together every musician in the confines of his kingdom and gave mighty feasts of rejoicing for three whole days, casting gold to the people and distributing numerous robes of honour.

When the feast was finished on the first night, World's-Delight went into the bridal chamber of Rose-in-the-Bud and, because they had hardly seen each other since they had met again, they threw themselves into each other's arms with a joy that passed the boundary of tears. Rose-in-the-Bud improvised these lines:

*See, the yellow lamp of joy abating  
All the black shades of our waiting  
To the grief of those  
Who were our foes.*

*Now the little winds of love are cooling  
Us, who had an ardent schooling  
And ate burning fruits . . .  
There are the flutes. . . .*

*These are not the salt tears of our grieving,  
But fresh silver waters weaving  
Nets to drown in joy  
A girl and boy.*

They sprang together and remained close pressed in each other's arms until they fell limp for delight.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

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*But when the night had come, she said:*

WHEN they came out of their lethargy, World's-Delight improvised these lines:

*These are the hours we deemed once,  
Merged in a bed divine now,  
Impossible-silver-seamed once.*

*Our bed is silver hung with sea yellow  
But fairer is my bed-fellow  
Than it, or anything the sky below.*

*Over us floats God's sign now,  
These are the hours we dreamed once,  
Proving that she is mine now.*

The two lovers clasped each other again and, throwing themselves upon the bed, crushed pleasure between them. Until they were drowned in love, they tempted his thousand different ways. Their delight, their lust, their happiness, their pleasure, and their joy made seven days and seven nights pass without notice. It was not until they saw the musicians come that they understood that they were at the end of the seventh day of their marriage. In her surprise Rose-in-the-Bud improvised these lines:

*I won to him in spite of sentinels.  
On virgin silks, on velvets, he has pressed me,  
And mattresses of feathers of rare birds.  
What need had I of wine when he caressed me  
And, with his words,  
What need of song?*

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*Present and past are in a popped dream  
And only seem;  
Though seven days and nights were long  
If spent in else.  
Here are the girls to say:  
“God make your day  
One night  
(Why were they sent in else?)  
With World's-Delight.”*

When she had recited these lines, World's-Delight embraced her an incalculable number of times and then improvised the following:

*I have drunken the perfumed sherbet of her eyes  
And gone outside the world.  
We have been curled  
Below, above, and lover-wise;  
Have lain as dead,  
Have leapt,  
Have slept  
But little, I can vouch,  
Forgetting on our couch  
The bitter nights, which would have frozen us,  
In a sweet rhythm of fire,  
For God has chosen us  
To be desire.*

Then the two rose and, going out of their chamber, gave to all who were in the palace gifts of money and presents of rare robes. Afterwards Rose-in-the-Bud gave order to her slaves that the hammām of the palace should be cleared for her especial use. “Cool of my eyes”, she said to World's-Delight, “I now so want to see

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you in the hammām, where we can be alone and at our ease.” A sudden wave of happiness came over her and she made up this song:

*Boy, without whom I may not go  
To any place, I love you so,  
Come to the hammām; let your eyes  
Make fire in a cool paradise.  
We will burn scent of nard and lie  
Naked in its blue wizardry,  
Dreaming above each other's flesh;  
We'll pardon Fate her clumsy mesh  
And whisper praise to the Most High  
That He has laid us thigh to thigh . . .  
Then, when you bathe I'll watch and sing:  
Oh, bathe for ever, sweet my king.*

When she had said these lines, the two lovers went to the hammām and passed agreeable hours there. Afterwards they returned to the palace and spent their lives in the most intense felicity, until they were visited by the Destroyer of pleasures, the Separator of friends.

Glory be to Him who moves not, the Eternal towards whom all lives and things converge!





## THE LOVERS' TOMB

*Then Shabrazād said:*

ABDALLĀH, son of al-Kaisī, tells this story in his writings.

He says:

I went one year on pilgrimage to the holy House of Allāh and, when I had accomplished my rites, returned to pay a second visit to the tomb of the Prophet (upon whom be the prayer and blessing of Allāh!) As I sat one night in a garden not far off from the tomb, I heard a voice singing sweetly in the silence, and gave all the attention of my charmed ears to its song:

*I am a nightingale singing of tears,  
She is a dove who will not sing or say;  
I am a lost black way,  
She shines and disappears;  
I am a night of fever years,  
She is the day.*

Then came silence, and I was looking about me for this passionate singer when I saw him coming towards me, a youth of heart-ravishing beauty whose face was bathed with tears. I could not help crying: "By Allāh, a most beautiful young man!" and stretching out my arms to him. He looked at me, and asked: "Who are you, and what do you want?" Bowing before his beauty, I answered: "What would one want of you save to look at you and give thanks to Allāh? I am your slave, Abdullāh ibn Maamar al-Kaisī, whose soul desires to know her lord. Your song has troubled me and the sight of you has carried me away. I would sacrifice my life for you!" The youth looked at me—oh, but his eyes were dark!—and bade me sit beside him. I came close, my spirit trembling within



me, and he said: "Since your heart is concerned with me, I will tell you what has happened. I am Utbah, son of al-Hubāb, son of al-Mundhir, son of al-Jumāh al-Ansārī. Yesterday, as I made my devotions in the mosque of my tribe, many beautiful women came in, swaying with their hips, and guarding, as it were, a young girl whose every charm exceeded theirs, though they were altogether murderous in beauty. This moon came up to me without being noticed in the crowd, and said: Long, 'O Utbah, have I sought this opportunity to speak with you. Would you be married to one who loves you and desires you as a husband?' Before I could answer she disappeared and slipped away among her companions, who took her with them outside the mosque and were lost in the crowd of pilgrims. Since then I have not been able to find her in spite of all my searchings; but my soul and my heart are with her and, even were I among the delights of Paradise, I would know no pleasure without seeing her again."

At this point Shahrāzād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

HIS downy cheeks glowed red as he spoke and my love glowed redder still; therefore I said to him: "O Utbah, O my cousin, put your hope in Allāh and pray to Him to pardon your transgressions! I am ready to help you, with all my power and means, to find the girl; for my own soul is drawn towards the charm of you, and I would gladly do even more to see your eyes rest upon me with content." So saying I pressed him to me and kissed him as brother kisses brother, all night I calmed the trouble of his sweet soul, and those moments were delicious but unsatisfied.

Next morning I took him to the mosque and made him enter before me. We waited until noon, at which hour the women had

come before; but, to our grave disappointment, though the women came they had not the girl among them. Seeing my friend's despair I begged him to wait until I had questioned the other damsels. I went up to them and learned that the girl was a virgin of noble birth, one Raiyā, daughter of al-Ghitrif, chief of the Banū Sulaim. "O women of good omen", said I, "why has she not come with you to-day?" "How could she have come?" they answered. "Her father, who has given his protection to pilgrims across the desert from Irāk to Mecca, returned yesterday with the riders of his tribe to the Euphrates, and took his daughter with him." I thanked the women for their news and returned to Utbah. "The tidings are not the best that I could wish", I said, and told him that Raiyā had returned to her tribe with her father. "But, O Utbah, O my cousin", I added, "do not be downhearted, for Allāh has given me riches beyond counting and I am ready to spend them all to pleasure you. From this moment, I make your cause my own. Follow me, if you please." So he rose and followed me to the mosque of al-Ansāris, which was his own mosque.

We waited until the congregation was full, and then I addressed the people in these words: "O Ansarite Believers here together, what is your considered opinion of Utbah and Utbah's father?" They answered with one voice: "He is of a noble family and a noble tribe among the Arabs." So I continued: "Know, then, that Utbah, son of al-Hubāb, is consumed by a violent passion. I have come to beg for your help in bringing about his happiness." "We shall be glad", said they, and I went on: "In that case you must come with me to the tents of the Banū Sulaim, to the abode of their chief al-Ghitrif, and ask the hand of his daughter for your cousin." Utbah and I and all that gallant assembly mounted our horses and rode without drawing rein until we reached the tents of the riders of al-Ghitrif, where they had pitched them six days' journey across the desert.

When al-Ghitrif saw us coming, he came to the door of his tent

to meet us; we greeted him and said: "O father of Arabs, we come to beg hospitality." "Be welcome beneath our tents, O noble guests!" he answered, and gave his slaves the necessary orders for our reception. The slaves spread mats and carpets in our honour, and sheep and camels were killed to make us a feast.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

**B**UT when the moment came for sitting down to that feast, we refused; and I addressed the sheikh al-Ghitrif in the name of all: "By the holy bond of bread and salt and by the faith of Arabs, we will not touch your meat until you have granted what we ask." "And what do you ask?" said al-Ghitrif. "We have come", I answered, "to solicit the hand of your noble daughter, Raiyā, for that brave, good, victorious and illustrious young man, Utbah, son of al-Hubāb al-Ansāri, son of al-Mundhir, son of al-Jumāh." The face and eyes of Raiyā's father changed, but he answered calmly: "O brother Arabs, there is but one who can answer the demand of the illustrious Utbah; it is for her to speak. I will go to her now." So saying he rose from among us, very yellow in the face, with an anger burning him which gave the lie to his words.

When he found his daughter in her tent, she was frightened by his expression, and asked: "Why are you so angry, my father?" He sat down gently beside her and then, as we heard afterwards, said to her: "I have given hospitality to al-Ansāris who have come to ask your hand in marriage for one of them." "Al-Ansāris are one of the noblest families of the Arabs", she answered. "Your hospitality was fitting. Which of them wishes to marry me?" "Utbah, son of Hubāb", he answered, and she exclaimed: "He is a known young man and worthy to mingle his blood with ours." But al-Ghitrif

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cried out in a fury: "What are you talking about? Have you had anything to do with him? I have sworn to my brother to give you to his son; none but my nephew shall enter the direct line of my nobility." "Then what will you answer al-Ansārīs?" said she. "They are very noble Arabs and exceedingly punctilious on all matters of honour and precedence. If you refuse me to them you will draw down their vengeance on you and all our tribe. They will think that you despise them, and never pardon you." "That is true", agreed her father, "but I will wrap up my refusal by asking an exorbitant dowry. The proverb says: 'It is easy not to marry a daughter if you ask enough for her.'"

He left the girl and returned to us, saying: "Dear guests, the daughter of our tribe makes no objection to the marriage, but she demands a dowry worthy of herself. Could any of you pay the price of this incomparable girl?" "I can!" cried Utbah; so al-Ghitrif continued: "Very well, then, my daughter demands a thousand bracelets of red gold, five thousand golden dīnārs of Hajar coinage, a necklace of five thousand pearls, a thousand squares of Indian silk, a dozen pairs of yellow leather boots, ten sacks of Irāk dates, a thousand head of cattle, a mare of the tribe, five chests of musk, five flasks of rose essence, and five coffers of ambergris. Do you consent?" "I consent, O father of the Arabs", answered Utbah. "Nay, I will increase the list."

I returned to Madinah with my friend, and we succeeded, after some difficulty, in gathering together all the things which had been demanded for the dowry. I spent my money freely and with more pleasure than if I had been buying for myself. We returned to the tents of the Banū Sulaim and gave the things to al-Ghitrif, so that the sheikh was obliged to receive as guests all al-Ansārīs who flocked together to make their compliments on the marriage of his daughter. The feasting went on for forty days and, during that time, numerous sheep and camels were killed and every variety of meat was kept simmering in large cauldrons, so that none might go hungry.

After the forty days we prepared a sumptuous palanquin on the back of two camels in file and placed the new bride within it; then we joyfully set out, followed by a whole caravan of camels bearing presents. My dear friend Utbah exulted to think the day would soon come when he should be alone with his beloved; he never left her for a moment during our travels, except to come down out of the palanquin for a few minutes and delight me with his grateful conversation.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

I REJOICED and said in my soul: “O Abdullāh, you are Utbah’s friend for ever! By denying yourself, you have touched his heart; surely one day your sacrifice will be more than rewarded. One day you will know his love in its most desirable and exquisite form.”

When we had only one day’s march left us before Madinah, we halted at night in a little oasis. Peace was there and the moon laughed down upon our joyful company; twelve palm trees stood slim above our heads and answered the song of the night wind with the rustle of their girlish leaves. Even as those who made the world of old, we rejoiced in the quiet hour, the cool water, the green sappy grass, and all the sweetness of the air. But, alas, even were a man winged he could not escape from Destiny. My friend Utbah was due to drink his cup to the lees, and at one draught. We were roused from our sleep by a terrible attack of armed riders, who fell upon us with cries of hate. These were men of the tribe of Banū Sulaim, sent by al-Ghitrif to carry back his daughter. He had not dared to violate the laws of hospitality under his own tents, but had waited, according to desert custom, to attack us after we had moved away. He counted without the valour of Utbah and our warriors.

## THE LOVERS' TOMB

We met their assault with great valour and, after killing many of them, put the rest to flight. Yet Utbah, my friend, took a lance-thrust in the battle and, when he had dragged himself to camp, fell dead in my arms.

Young Raiyā gave a great cry and fell across the body of her lover; she mourned all night, and in the morning we found her dead of a broken heart. May Allāh take the two of them into His mercy! We dug a grave in the sand and buried them side by side; then we returned in deep grief to Madinah. I finished what I had to finish in that place and returned to my own country.

Seven years later, desire came to me to go on pilgrimage once more and my soul yearned to visit the tomb of Utbah and Raiyā. When I came to the grave, I found it shaded by a fair tree of an unknown kind, which al-Ansāris had piously planted. I sat down weeping upon a stone in the shadow of the tree, and said to those who were with me: "My friends, tell me the name of that tree which weeps with me over the grave of Utbah and Raiyā?" And they answered: "It is the Tree of Lovers." Dear Utbah, would that I rested with you in the peace of God beneath the shadow of that tree!



## THE TALE OF PRINCESS NŪR AL-NIHĀR AND THE LOVELY JINNĪYAH

*But when the night had come, Shabrazād said:*

It is related, O auspicious King, that there was once, in the antiquity of time and the passage of the age and of the moment, a valorous king, to whom Allāh, in His goodness, had given three handsome sons: the eldest was called Alī, the second Hasan, and the third Husain. These three princes were brought up in their father's palace with their orphan cousin, Princess Nūr al-Nihār, who had no equal among the daughters of men for beauty and intelligence. She had a deer's eyes and her mouth was a rose; the narcissus and the anemone were in her cheeks and she wavered like a branch of the ban tree. She had grown in joy from babyhood with her three cousins, eating and sleeping with them, and the Sultān ever had it in mind to marry her to the son of some neighbouring king.

But when Nūr al-Nihār had put on the veil of puberty, the Sultān saw that all his sons loved her with an equal passion and would give their hearts to conquer and possess her. In his perplexity, he said: "If I give the child to one of her cousins, the other two will murmur against me, and I could not bear to see them sad and wounded. But if I marry her to some strange prince, all three will be plunged in a black distress and perhaps either kill themselves or depart for some far battle. Indeed I have a difficult problem to resolve." After long reflection, he called the three princes to him, saying: "My sons, you are all equal in my sight and I cannot show a preference to one by giving him the hand of our little princess in marriage; also I cannot marry her to all three of you. I only see one way of settling the matter so that there shall be no hard feeling between you: each of you must set out for a different land and bring back the strangest rarity he sees upon his travels. I will give the princess to the one who, in my opinion, returns with the



greatest marvel. If you consent to this competition, I am ready to give each of you as much gold as he may need for the enterprise.”

The three princes readily agreed to their father's plan, each feeling certain that he would bring back the greatest marvel and marry Nūr al-Nihār. Seeing them persuaded, the Sultān sent for his treasurer and had each of his sons provided with as many bags of gold as he decided to take. Then, after recommending that they should not stay away too long, he gave them his blessing and bade them farewell. They set out on that same day, disguised as merchant travellers, mounted upon noble horses, and followed by a single slave apiece.

They rode together until they came to a khān at the meeting of three roads. There they took a bountiful repast together and settled the conditions of their search. It was agreed that each should be absent for one year, not a day more or less; that they should meet at this same khān at the end of that time, the first comer to wait for the rest, in order that they might return to their father in company. When their meal was finished, they washed their hands and embraced each other. Then they mounted their horses and each set forth by a different road.

After a journey of three months over mountain and valley, desert and meadowland, the eldest of the three brothers, Prince Alī, came to the kingdom of Bishangarh on the sea coast of India. He hired the largest and cleanest chambers in the chief khān for himself and his slave, and then lay down to rest. As soon as the fatigue of riding had passed away, he rose and went forth to examine the city, which was two parasangs in length and breadth, and girt by a triple wall. He made his way to the market, which he found to be formed of broad elegant streets converging on a central square, which held a marble fountain. All these streets were arched in to keep them cool; but they were pleasantly lighted by fretted openings in the stone. He discovered that each street

harboured a different trade with all its merchandise. Thus, in one he saw nothing but fine Indian lawns, painted in bright pure colour with animals, forests, gardens of flowers; Persian brocades and silks from China. In another were fair porcelains and brilliant earthenware, with symmetrical vases, pictured dishes and extravagant shapes of glass. A third street showed every variety of those great Kashmir shawls which are so fine in texture that, when folded, they can be held in the hollow of one hand; with prayer rugs and every design of carpet. One street, further to the left and closed at both ends by massive steel doors, was given over to a prodigious profusion of the goldsmith's work and art of the diamond-setter. Prince Ali noticed with surprise that all the women in the crowd which thronged the market wore jewels about their legs, and on their feet, and through their ears, and even in their noses; also, he perceived that the whiter the woman, the more splendid gems she wore and the greater deference was paid to her, though the blacker women had skins which would have better shown off the precious stones.

But most Prince Ali admired the great quantity of little boys who sold roses and jasmine, the charming air with which they offered these flowers, and the way they seemed to slip through the crowds of people with the ease of quicksilver. He admired the strange liking which all these folk had for flowers, a predilection which caused them to wear blossoms in their hair, and behind their ears, and from their nostrils. Each shop was garnished with vases full of the prevailing rose and jasmine, and the whole market was so balmed with the scent of flowers that he seemed to himself to walk in a hanging garden.

When Prince Ali became weary of wandering among these beauties, he accepted the invitation of a merchant, who smiled at him from the door of his shop and invited him to enter. The man gave him the place of honour and served him with refreshments, neither urging him to buy nor plaguing him with idle questions.

“What a delightful country!” thought the prince, “and what delightful people!” The charm of the merchant so wrought upon him that he was inclined to buy all his stock; but, when he reflected that he would not know what to do with it, he contented himself with friendly talking.

While he was questioning his host concerning the manners and customs of the Indians, he saw a broker passing with a little carpet, not more than six feet square, folded across his arm. Outside the shop the broker halted and turned his head to right and left, crying: “Folk of the market, O buyers! I offer a bargain! This carpet, this prayer-carpet, for thirty thousand gold dīnārs! I offer a bargain!”

“What a strange land!” thought Ali. “A prayer carpet for thirty thousand dīnārs! I wonder if the man is joking?” But when he heard the man offer the carpet again, quite seriously, at the same price, he signed to him to approach and show his goods more nearly. Without a word the broker spread out the carpet; Prince Ali examined it carefully, and then said: “By Allāh, I cannot see how this carpet can be worth such an exorbitant sum!” The broker smiled, as he answered: “Yet it is cheap at the price. Indeed I am instructed not to sell it for less than forty thousand dīnārs down, though I have started the sale at thirty thousand.” “Then”, cried the prince, “there must be some virtue in the carpet which is not visible to the naked eye.”

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

“**Y**ou are right, my lord”, answered the broker. “The carpet has this invisible virtue: that he who sits on it is transported in the twinkling of an eye to the place of his desire. Nothing may stay its course; tempests flee before it

and storms are dumb; mountains and walls and mighty locks open and give way at its approach."

Without another word, the broker began to fold up the carpet and move on; but Prince Alī stopped him with a joyful cry: "O broker of benediction, if what you say is true, I will pay you forty thousand dinārs and add a further thousand as commission to yourself. But first I must have a demonstration of the miracle." "Where are your forty thousand dinārs, my master?" asked the broker without showing undue delight, "and where are the further thousand which your generosity has promised?" "They are at the chief khān", answered Prince Alī, "I will go there with you and pay you, as soon as I have controlled the marvel." "Be it upon my head and before my eyes", replied the broker. "But the chief khān is far from here; we would go quicker upon the carpet than by walking." He spread out the carpet at the back of the shop and bade the prince be seated on it. Taking his place by his side, he said: "Now, my lord, wish to be transported to your own room in the khān." Prince Alī formulated the wish in his mind and, before he had time to speak a word of parting to the merchant who had so civilly entreated him, found himself transported, without shock or discomfort, to the centre of his own apartment. Nor could he tell whether he had flown through the air or gone beneath the ground. The broker sat beside him, wearing a satisfied smile.

Being thoroughly convinced of the carpet's power, the prince said to his slave: "Give this excellent fellow forty purses of a thousand dinārs and, into his other hand, a purse of a thousand." The slave obeyed, and the broker, after wishing that the purchase might bring luck, went upon his way.

Prince Alī was delighted to think that he had found so extraordinary a marvel in so short a time. "By the mercy of Allāh I have attained my goal already", he said to himself. "Now I know that I shall vanquish my brothers and marry Nūr al-Nihār. My father will be overjoyed when he makes trial of this carpet. Surely

my brothers cannot find anything near so wonderful. . . . But why should I not return at once, since distance is no object to me?" Then he remembered that he had agreed with his brothers to meet them in a year's time at the khān, so, not wishing to wait for many months in that forsaken place, he preferred to distract himself in the admirable land of India. On the next day he took a second walk throughout the city.

Among the curious wonders of that land, he saw a temple filled with brass idols, having a dome fifty cubits high which bore three levels of pictures in coloured carving. The whole temple was ornamented with shallow-cut designs of cunning chisels, and stood in a mighty rose garden. But its principal wonder was a solid gold statue among those brass idols (may they be damned and broken!). This figure stood at a man's height and had eyes of moving rubies, which rolled incessantly to follow the movements of any who stood before it. The priests celebrated their unbelieving cult morning and evening, and the ceremony was followed by games, music, buffoonery, feasting and the dancing of women. These priests had no stipend and lived entirely on the gifts of pilgrims, who thronged daily to their temple from distant lands.

While he was in Bishangarh, Prince Ali was present at the great annual feast, which is presided over by the walis of all the provinces, by the captains of the army, and by the Brahmins, for that is the name given to the priests of the idols. The people thronged in their thousands into a vast plain, which was overlooked by a very high tower prepared for the reception of the King and his court. This tower was held up by eighty pillars and painted outside with presentations of birds and animals, flies and gnats. Near it there were three or four broad stands for the common people, and these were so constructed that they could face in any direction and change their decoration every hour. The entertainment began with clever juggling and sleight-of-hand, and dances by fakirs. Then a thousand elephants advanced in battle order, each bearing

a square tower of gold wood, filled with jesters and musicians. The trunks and ears of these elephants were painted with vermilion and cinnabar, their tusks were gilt all over, and their bodies were tinted in bright colours with a grotesque contortion of whirling arms and legs. When the troop had drawn up in a straight line facing the spectators, two much greater elephants, without towers, came forward and stood in the circle formed by the stands.

One of them began dancing to the sound of music, sometimes on his hind and sometimes on his front legs; then he climbed with great agility to the top of a post and, standing with all four legs drawn together, beat his trunk and wagged his ears to the rhythm of the players, while the other elephant swung on the end of a second pole, placed horizontally across a support, and, being balanced by a great stone at the opposite end of the pole, seesawed up and down in time to the music.

With such shows and other delights Prince Alī passed his time, until the torment of his love for Nūr al-Nihār could be combated no longer. Though the year was not over, he took his slave upon the magic carpet and wished himself before the khān at the meeting of the three roads. When he opened his eyes, which he had shut in order to concentrate his mind, he found himself outside the khān. He secured quarters there and set himself to wait for his brothers. So much for him.

The second brother, Prince Hasan, soon met with a caravan going towards Persia. This he joined and, after much weary travel over plain and desert, meadow and mountain, came to the city of Shīrāz. He took lodging at the chief khān and, on the following morning, while his friends the merchants were opening their bales and setting out their merchandise, went forth to view the city. He made his way to the market, which is called the Bazistān, and walked marvelling among the fine display of carpets and brocaded silks. The place was packed with brokers, busily pushing their wares, and among them Hasan saw a venerable man walking slowly

and gravely, not thrusting and shouting like the others, but holding an ivory tube in his hand as if it had been a king's sceptre.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

“**T**HAT broker inspires my confidence”, said Prince Hasan, and he walked towards him, meaning to beg for a closer sight of the tube; but before he could reach him, the man began proclaiming in a proud magnificent voice: “A bargain, a bargain, O buyers! Thirty thousand dīnārs for this ivory tube! The maker is dead and there will never be another! Thirty thousand dīnārs for this ivory tube! A bargain, a bargain, O buyers!”

The prince recoiled in astonishment, and said to the owner of a neighbouring shop: “Can you tell me whether this broker is sane, mad, or jesting, my master?” “He is the most honest and the most wise of all our brokers”, answered the man. “We all employ him for important business. I can answer for his sanity, unless he has lost it since this morning. As he is crying that ivory tube for thirty thousand dīnārs it must be worth at least that, though its value is not patent. I will call the man, if you wish, and you can question him. Come into my shop and rest yourself.”

Hasan sat down in the shop and the merchant called to the broker, saying: “This honourable stranger is surprised that you should ask thirty thousand dīnārs for a little ivory tube, and I, though I know your probity, am surprised too. Can you explain?” The broker turned to the prince, saying: “I can understand your astonishment, my master, but, when you have seen, you will doubt me no longer. Also, I may tell you that, though I have opened the sale at thirty thousand dīnārs, I am not allowed to sell for less than forty thousand down.” Then said Prince Hasan: “I am ready to

believe that it is worth the money, if you assure me that it has some hidden virtue.” “You notice that one end is fitted with a crystal”, replied the broker. “A man who looks through that sees all he wishes to see.” “If you speak truth”, cried the prince, “I will not only pay your price, but give you a commission of a thousand dīnārs. Let me look!” The broker handed him the tube and Hasan gazed through the crystal, while he wished fervently to behold the Princess Nūr al-Nihār. Immediately he saw her sitting among her slaves in the bath of the hammām, laughing, playing with the water, and glancing into a mirror. Seeing her so near and fair, the prince uttered a cry and nearly dropped the magic ivory.

Being sure that no greater marvel could be found in a ten years’ search, he hastily led the broker to the khān and paid him over the price and commission which he had promised.

To while away the time until he might meet and astonish his brothers, he spent his days with the poets of that city and learnt several of the most beautiful Persian compositions by heart. But when the caravan which had brought him there was about to return, he rejoined it and soon arrived without accident at the khān of meeting. There he stayed with his brother to await the coming of Husain. So much for him.

Prince Husain, the youngest of the three brothers, journeyed without accident to the city of Samarkand al-Ajam, where, O auspicious King, your glorious brother, Shahzamān, reigns to-day. On the morning of his arrival he visited the market, which is there called the bazaar, and, while watching the stream of the people, saw a broker carrying an apple in his hand. This apple, which was as large as a melon, was red on one side and gold on the other. Husain was taken with its beauty, and asked the broker its price. “I have opened the sale at thirty thousand dīnārs”, the broker said, “but I am not allowed to sell for less than forty thousand down.” “It certainly is the finest apple that I have ever seen”, cried Husain, “but I think that you must be jesting about the price.” “Not at all,



my lord", replied the man, "the price falls far short of the value. For this apple's appearance is as nothing to its smell, and its smell as nothing to its virtue for the good of mankind." "Let me smell it then", answered Husain, "afterwards you can tell me of its virtue." The broker held the apple under the prince's nose and the youth, having breathed in its suave and penetrating odour, cried aloud: "As Allāh lives, all the weariness of my journey has departed! It is as if I had been born again!" Then said the broker: "Now that you have tried a little of its power, you will be more ready to hear the truth about this apple. It is not a natural fruit, but was made by the hand of man; it was born, not of a blind tree, but of the study and vigil of a great philosopher. He passed his long life in learning the curative properties of all plants and minerals, and, as a last triumph, mingled his knowledge and the life-giving simples of the world in this one apple. There is no disease, whether it be plague, purple fever, leprosy, or the awful coming of Death himself, which cannot be cured by smelling at the fruit. As complete proof of what I say, I should like some incurable person to be cured before your eyes. In the meanwhile, the greater part of these merchants will bear witness to what I say and confess that they owe to this apple the fact that they are still alive."

Many people had paused while the broker was speaking. Now they cried: "As Allāh lives, all that is true! It is the queen of apples and the universal remedy of time!" As if to confirm what they were saying, a blind and paralytic old man was borne past in a basket on the back of a porter. The broker took a step forward and held the apple beneath the nose of the motionless figure; immediately the old man rose in the basket and, leaping over the porter's head like a young cat, ran swiftly away, turning the eyes of youth to right and left.

Being now convinced that the apple was miraculous, Prince Husain led the broker to his khān and paid him forty thousand dīnārs for the fruit and a thousand as commission for himself. Quite certain of a triumph over his brothers, he waited patiently

until a caravan was ready to depart in the direction of his home. When it set forth, he travelled with it and came without accident to the khān at the meeting of the three roads.

The three princes embraced each other tenderly and sat down together to meat.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

WHEN they had eaten, they agreed together to display the marvels which they had found, in order to form some idea of their father's preference.

The eldest displayed his carpet and, after remarking upon its common and lustreless appearance, told them how it had borne him in the twinkling of an eye from Bishangarh to that place. As a proof of his words, he bade them sit upon it and took them to a spot at the other end of the world.

In less than a moment they were back again, and Prince Hasan showed the ivory tube. As a proof of its power, he held the crystal to his eye, saying: "O magic ivory, I wish to see the Princess Nūr al-Nihār." Even as he spoke, his face changed colour; when his brothers questioned him concerning his anxiety, he cried: "There is no power or might save in Allāh! O brothers, we have journeyed in vain, for our sweet cousin lies upon her bed among her weeping women and death is very near. See for yourselves!" Ali looked through the crystal and groaned, but Husain looked and laughed, saying: "Do not be concerned, my brothers. Though our cousin is very ill this apple will cure her. Nay, were she dead, I believe it would bring her up living from the tomb." He told the story of the magic fruit in a few words, and Ali cried: "Let us make all haste to the palace upon my carpet; then you can try the saving virtue of your apple."

The three princes bade their slaves go forward on horseback and, seating themselves on the carpet, wished to be transported to the death chamber of the princess.

In a flash of time they found themselves seated near the bed and circled by frightened screaming women. The eunuchs did not recognise them at first and were about to fall upon them, when Husain rose and showed his face. He leaned over the bed where the princess lay in agony and held the apple to her nostrils. She opened her eyes and sat up, smiling upon her cousins and congratulating them on their safe return. She gave them her hand to kiss and, hearing how Hasan had seen her, Ali had come to her, and Husain had cured her, thanked Husain most, but all most cordially.

As she was anxious to rise and dress, her cousins left her and presented themselves before their father. The Sultān had already heard of their strange arrival and of the princess's cure; so, after he had embraced them with great love, he gave them leave to show him the rarities which they had brought.

But when he had seen each magic thing and had listened carefully to an account of its power, he was perplexed, and said: "My sons, you have given me a difficult and delicate problem. In the justice of my mind, I cannot but hold these three rarities of equal value; for the magic ivory learned of the princess's illness, the magic carpet hastened to her, and the magic apple cured her; yet each would have been useless without the other. My choice is even more embarrassed now than it was before you left. There is no other way for it; I must set you another test. Let each of you join me at once in the polo-ground beyond the city, and bring a bow and arrow with him. He whose arrow is found to have gone the furthest shall marry Nūr al-Nihār."

The three princes went off to fetch their arms, while the Sultān rode to the polo-ground, accompanied by a troop of officers from the palace. When his sons arrived, the Sultān bade them shoot in order of age. Ali bent his bow and his arrow sped far; but when

Hasan shot, his arrow fell further. Husain fired last and watchers, who had been placed to follow the flight of the arrows, could not find his shaft, though they searched diligently.

The Sultān then addressed the princes, saying: "My sons, the matter is decided. Though it would appear that Husain shot furthest, you will remember that my words were: 'He whose arrow is found' . . . therefore I declare that Hasan wins the princess. It is his Destiny."

On his return to the city the Sultān gave immediate orders for a splendid festival to be prepared, and in a few days Hasan was magnificently married to Nūr al-Nihār. So much for them.

Urged by his hopeless passion for the princess, Alī refused to be present at the marriage and, after publicly renouncing his claim to the succession of the throne, dressed himself as a darwīsh and placed himself under the spiritual direction of a saintly old man, who taught the example of life in a far solitude. So much for him.

Prince Husain, whose arrow had been lost to view. . . .

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

PRINCE Husain, whose arrow had been lost to view, followed his eldest brother's example by abstaining from the feast, but had no thought of giving up the world. Instead, he resolved to prove that he had been cheated out of his prize and, in order to do so, began to search for his arrow. Walking out from the polo-ground, he followed the direction which his shaft had taken and went straight forward for an hour, casting glances to right and left. Though in this time he saw no sign of the arrow, he refused to be discouraged and continued in the same direction until his way was barred by a pile of rocks. Considering that, if the arrow were anywhere, it would be near him,

since it could not have passed through the rocks, he began searching in a circle and soon found the shaft, not stuck in the earth, but lying flat with its point forward. "This is a miracle of Allāh!" he cried. "No man in the world could shoot so far! And my arrow must have been going bravely, since it had the strength to rebound so far. Surely I have stumbled upon a mystery!"

He picked up his arrow and was examining the broad face of the nearest rock for a trace of its impact, when he perceived the outline of a door masked in the solid stone. He gave it a careless push, hardly expecting it to open, and it swung back as if on new-greased hinges. Without thinking what he did, Husain stepped through the opening and found himself in a gently sloping gallery; also, as soon as he had crossed the threshold, the door shut of its own accord and all his efforts to open it from the inside only resulted in a breaking of his nails.

As he was a brave youth, he strode forward in the gross darkness, following the fall of the gallery, and presently saw light ahead of him. A few more paces brought him out into the open air and he found himself on the border of a grassy plain, in the middle of which stood a palace of strange magnificence. As he looked, a lady came out of the palace followed by a group of damsels, and he was sure, from her queenly carriage and perfect beauty, that she was the mistress and those the slaves. She was dressed in dim fairy silks and her hair fell to her heels in one dark cataract. As she approached, she stretched forth her hand to the youth, and said kindly: "Be very welcome, O Prince Husain!"

The prince, who had bowed low as the lady approached, straightened himself in astonishment when he heard himself addressed by name; he was about to speak, but she prevented him, saying: "Do not question me now. I will satisfy your curiosity when we are seated in my palace." She took his hand with a smile and led him through alleys to a reception hall beyond the garden's marble portico. She sat beside him on a couch, and said, still

clasping his hand: "Charming Prince Husain, I have known you since your birth, I have smiled above your cradle, I am a princess of the Jinn, and my Destiny is twined with yours. I caused the magic apple to be sold in Samarkand, the carpet in Bishangarh, the ivory tube in Shīrāz. I tell you this that you may realise my knowledge of you to be complete. As my fate and yours are mingled, I have judged you worthy of a nobler wife than your cousin. For that reason, I made your arrow invisible and caused it to fall among the rocks, that you might follow it and come to me. Happiness is within your grasp, if you have a mind to clutch it."

The fair immortal spoke with great tenderness and, when she had finished, lowered her eyelids on her mantling cheeks. Then Husain, who already realised that this girl surpassed Nūr al-Nihār in face and form, intelligence and riches, bowed before her, saying: "Princess of the Jinn, queen of my captive soul, a human such as I can hardly control his thoughts in your presence. How can so sweet an Ifritah leave the invisible Kings and love a human? If you have quarrelled with your parents and are receiving me in order to pique them, I pray you let me know, for I would not cause you a moment's discomfort." Here Prince Husain bowed again and kissed the Jinnīyah's robe; but she raised him, saying: "I am my own mistress, Husain. I allow no spirit of earth or air to check me in what I do. Do you wish to marry me and love me?" "Do I wish?" echoed Prince Husain. "I would give my life for one day in your presence, not as a husband only, but even as a slave!" He threw himself at the girl's feet and she raised him a second time, saying: "Then I accept your suit, and we are wed. Now let us take our first repast together, for you must be hungry."

She led him into a second hall, lighted by an infinity of candles perfumed with amber and arranged in patterns of symmetry. To the sound of women's voices singing in the air about them, they sat down before gold dishes and such meats as would snare the hearts of mortal men. The lovely Jinnīyah chose out delicacies and

offered them to her husband in her own fingers, and the youth, though still bewildered, gave all his senses to the meat and fruit and wine.

When the repast was over, the princess led Husain into a third hall, which was loftier than the other two: and they sat among cushions worked with large flowers in bright colours. Immortal dancers came to the sound of unseen music and danced before them as light as birds. Then, at a sign from the princess, they drifted, like fluttering scarves, up a staircase of jasper and, leading the way for the married, left them to sleep in a chamber where the bridal bed had been made for them with tinted silks.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

THEY lay among the perfumes of that bed, but not to sleep. Husain tasted beauties which no mortal girl could show and, after extreme delight, visited the place again. He found it as close-sealed as it had been before and understood, through the long hours of that night, that the virginity of a daughter of the Jinn is eternally renewed. As the days passed by, his love grew greater with possession and he found that his bride had ever some new charm to offer him.

But at the end of six months the prince felt a strong desire to see his father again, for he loved him greatly and feared that the old man would be mourning for his absence. At first his wife was afraid that he was making a pretext to abandon her; but he gave her such proofs of his valiant passion and spoke of his father with such eloquent tenderness, that at last she said: "Dear love, if I only listened to my heart, I could never let you go, even for a day, even for an hour; but my soul tells me that our love is a strong chain. I therefore make no further difficulty." "Woman of beauty", replied

Prince Husain, "I swear by your head, which is the most treasured thing in all the world, that I will only take the time to go and return. Calm your dear spirit and refresh your eyes, for, if I think of you all the time, Allāh will surely allow no evil to befall me."

The Jinniyah wept, but said: "Go then, in Allāh's name, dear love, and be careful not to tell your father or your brothers that you are married to a daughter of the Jinn. Keep secret the place of our abiding and the road which leads to it: tell them you are in all things happy and have only returned to set their minds at rest."

The Jinniyah gave Husain twenty well-armed riders as a guard, and had a horse led forth for him of finer mettle than is known in the stables of the world. The prince kissed his wife and, going up to that handsome trembling steed, flattered him with his hand, spoke in his ear, and leaped into the saddle. Then he rode forward with his train, followed by the admiring glances of his wife.

The way was not long, and the prince soon reached the gate of his father's city. The people recognised him and followed him with joyful acclamation to the Sultān's palace. His father wept with joy on beholding him; he embraced him and chid him gently for the long anxiety of his absence. "I thought I would never see you again", he said, "I feared that your disappointment had driven you to some rash act." "Indeed, dear father", answered Husain, "the loss of the princess was bitter to me, for love is a tree which cannot be uprooted in a moment." Then he told his father of the search for the arrow; but would reveal nothing beyond the point of his coming to the barrier of rocks. "I can only say, my father", he concluded, "that I have now forgotten Nūr al-Nihār and all my troubles. Life has opened fair and sweet before me; its one shadow has been that you might grieve for me."

"No father could ask more for his son than happiness", answered the King. "I should have liked to have you by me until my death, but it seems that this may not be." "I promise to visit you so often,



my father, that you will grow wearied of my coming", cried the prince. "That is well, my child", said the Sultān, "but how may I send to ask news of you?" "I may not give you a direction for sending", answered Husain, "for that is part of the mystery of an oath which I have sworn. But you may be certain that I am in all things happy, and I swear that I will visit you once a month." Prince Husain stayed three days with his father in the palace and, on the morning of the fourth day, took leave of him and departed at the head of his escort.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

THE lovely Jinnīyah, who had not expected him to return so quickly, received him with infinite joy, and they celebrated their reunion with an agreeable diversity of the modes of love.

In the days which followed, the Jinnīyah introduced continual variation into the life of that enchanted place: she found for her husband new fashions of taking the air, of walking, eating, drinking, dancing and singing; of music, poetry, and the perfume of roses; fresh ways of decking themselves with flowers, plucking ripe fruits from the branches, and playing the game of lovers, which is a more subtle game than chess and played with bed for board.

After a month of these delights Prince Husain was obliged, by his oath to his father, to ride forth again at the head of his escort.

Now, during Husain's last absence from his father's court, certain favourite counsellors, dismayed by his rich seeming while he had made his first visit, abused the liberty of free speech and poured poison in the King's ear. "It seems to us", they said, "only prudent that your majesty should find out the place of your son's

retreat. Surely the prince only paraded his wealth in the palace to show that he was independent of his father and could still live royally after he had cast off his allegiance. Soon he will be making himself a party among your subjects, to dethrone our Sultān and usurp his empire.”

Though he was disturbed by their words, the Sultān would not admit that his favourite son was capable of such a plot, and he answered his counsellors severely: “O tongues of venom, do you not know that my son Husain loves me and that I have never tried his fidelity by a single harshness?” Then said the chief of the favourites: “O King of time, do you think that he has so easily forgotten your decision in regard to our princess? He did not take the matter well; he did not follow his eldest brother in a renunciation of the world. Also did you not notice that his men were as fresh and untouched by dust when they arrived as if they had but walked out of their own doors, and that their horses were as glossy and unbreathed as if they were returning from a simple canter? Surely it is clear that Prince Husain has some secret abode near your capital, from which he intends to foment trouble among the people. We would have been lacking in our duty if we had not touched upon this delicate affair; we beseech you to have a care for your own preservation and the good of your loyal subjects.”

“I do not know what to believe and what not to believe”, replied the Sultān. “I am obliged to you for your advice, and will keep my eyes open in the future.” He dismissed these malicious favourites, without showing how far their words had gained upon him, and made up his mind that, when he had regarded his son’s words and actions more closely, he would either reward the busybodies or utterly confound them.

When the prince came, the Sultān received him with the same joy as before, and showed no sign of suspicion; but, on the following morning, he called to him a certain old woman who was famous about the palace both for malice and sorcery, and who could

have unravelled a spider's web without breaking a single filament. "Mother of benediction", he said to her, "the time has come for you to prove your devotion to the throne. Since my son Husain has returned to me I have not been able to learn from him the place of his present dwelling. As I do not wish to push my authority, I require you to obtain that information for me secretly. My son sets out again to-morrow at dawn, and I suggest that you lie in wait for him near that tumble of rocks which bounds the plain to the east. For he tells me that he found his Destiny where he found his arrow." The old sorceress bowed low and, going forth to the rocks immediately, hid herself in a place of vantage.

Next morning Prince Husain left the palace at the first show of light in order not to attract undue attention in the streets. Soon he came with his escort to the door in the rock and, greatly to the amazement of the old watcher, passed through it and disappeared.

The hag ran to the place where she had seen horses and riders vanish, but could find no trace of a door; for the entrance was only visible to men who might please the Jinniyah; from women, and especially from old and horrible women, it was entirely hidden. The sorceress gave vent to her rage in a sounding fart, which raised a storm of dust and lifted the smaller rocks into the air; then she returned to the King and told him what she had seen. "O Sultān of time, I will do better on the next occasion", she said. "I only beg you not to ask what steps I intend to take." "Use what means you will", cried the Sultān. "Depart under the keeping of Allāh; and I will wait your news impatiently." He gave her a magnificent diamond, as an earnest of greater rewards to follow, and she departed about her business.

A month later, Prince Husain came out through the door in the rock with his twenty horsemen and, as he picked his way among the boulders, beheld a poor old woman, moaning upon the ground and writhing as if in agony. Her tears and rags appealed to the

prince's compassion, so he reined in his horse and asked the woman what he might do for her relief. Without raising her head the sorceress answered in a whisper: "Lord of my help, Allāh has sent you that I may not die unburied. Alas, alas, I feel my soul slipping away. I left my village this morning to go to the city, but lo! I was taken with a red fever which has cast me down to perish among these rocks." But Prince Husain cheered her, saying: "Good aunt, if you will allow two of my men to carry you, I will return with you to my dwelling and have you well looked after." As the old woman made no difficulty, two of the escort lifted her from the ground and followed their master, who had already returned through the secret door in the rock.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

SEEING the riders return, the Jinniyah hastened forth to meet her husband. He showed her the old woman, who lay back looking very ill in the arms of two of the escort, and said: "Dear queen, Allāh set this suffering old woman upon our road. I recommend her to your kindness and skill." The princess gave the sorceress a searching glance and then handed her over to her women, bidding them care for her and show her all respect. Then she turned to her husband, and said in a low voice: "Allāh will reward you for your good intention. But you need have no fear for this old woman; for she is no more ill than I am. I know why she was sent here and I know by whom; but you may rest assured that none can plot against you in evil without my knowing and flying to your rescue. Now go forth again under the protection of Allāh!" Husain, who had grown used by this time not to question his wife too closely, kissed her again and departed for his father's capital, where he arrived without adventure. The King received

him as usual and gave no hint in his greeting that anyone had striven to sow suspicion between them.

The old sorceress was taken to a fair apartment in the palace, laid to rest on a mattress of embroidered satin, and covered first with fine silks and then with heavy cloth of gold. One of the women prepared her a glass of water from the Fountain of Lions and gave it to her, saying: "This water cures all disease and can give health to the dying." The old woman drank the draught and, after waiting for a few moments, cried: "An admirable elixir! I am cured as if my disease had been drawn forth with pincers! Lead me to your mistress quickly that I may thank her for her goodness." The old deceiver rose up and allowed herself to be led through hall after hall of great magnificence, until she appeared before the throne itself.

This throne was of solid gold, mooned with emeralds, and the lovely Jinniyah sat upon it, robed in the stuff of dreams. The old woman, dazzled by what she saw, fell babbling thanks before the throne's foot. "I am delighted to hear of your cure", said the Jinniyah kindly. "I give you leave to stay in the palace for as long as you wish; my women will show you round." The sorceress kissed the earth and then followed two of the queen's young girls, who displayed all the marvels of the palace to her attentive gaze. When she had seen all, she begged leave to retire, so the women led her outside the door in the rock and wished her well. As soon as they were out of sight, she hurried back to mark the place of the door, but it had disappeared.

When she came to the city, she told the Sultān all that she had seen and assured him that it would be impossible for any human to find the entrance to the palace. The Sultān called his wazīrs and favourite counsellors and, after repeating the tale to them, asked for their advice. Some said that Prince Husain should be put to death, others that he should be imprisoned for life; but the sorceress begged leave to speak, and said: "O King of time, I think that the best plan of all would be to take advantage of your son's pretence

of filial affection to obtain for yourself some of the marvels which I saw in such profusion at his palace. If he consents you will be incalculably richer, if he refuses it will not be too late to take the harsher advice of your counsellors." "Be it so", answered the King, and straightway sent for Husain. "My son", said he, "now that you are richer and more powerful than your poor old father, can you not bring me some little present on your next visit; perhaps a tent which I may use when I am out hunting or go to the wars?" Prince Husain agreed most readily to this suggestion and assured him that he would joyfully make greater gifts than that.

When Husain reached the fairy palace again, he told his wife of his father's wish. "As Allāh lives, I am sorry that he only asks for such a trifle", answered the Jinnīyah. Then she called her treasurer, saying: "Take forth the greatest tent which I have in my treasure, and tell Shaibah to bring it to me."

A few minutes later the treasurer returned with the treasure's guardian, a Jinnī of unusual and terrifying aspect. He was a foot and a half in height and had a beard thirty feet long; his moustache was twisted up to his ears and his pig's eyes were deeply sunk in a head larger than his body. Over his right shoulder he carried a bar of iron, five times as heavy as himself, and in the palm of his left hand he bore a small folded packet. When this creature appeared, the Jinnīyah addressed him, saying: "O Shaibah, you will accompany my husband, Prince Husain, to his father's palace. And when you get there you will do your duty." Shaibah bowed, and asked: "Shall I take the tent with me, dear mistress?" "Certainly", she replied. "But first set it up here that our lord may see it." Shaibah went out into the garden and unfolded the little packet which he carried; from it he drew a pavilion which could have shaded a whole army, and whose peculiar property it was to shrink or swell at need. When he had showed off this marvel to the prince, he refolded it and cried: "Now for the Sultān!"

The people of the city saw Prince Husain enter the city and, at

the sight of the immortal dwarf who swaggered in beside him, making play with his iron bar, ran with affrighted cries into their houses. When the two reached the palace, the eunuchs and the guards fled in terror before them, so that they entered the presence unannounced. The Sultān sat talking with the sorceress, in the midst of his favourite counsellors. As soon as Prince Husain had greeted his father, Shaibah advanced to the foot of the throne and cried: "O King of time, I have brought you the pavilion!" Then, retiring a few paces, he unwrapped the mighty tent from its small covering and set it up, quite little, before him on the floor. From its shelter he suddenly hurled his iron bar at the head of the grand-wazir, stunning him and bringing him to the ground. Then, with the quickness of an eel, he skipped in and out among the counsellors until he had dealt a blow at each; and only the King, the Prince, and the sorceress remained upright. The dwarf turned next to the old woman, crying: "I have a better cure than Lion water for such as you!" and brought his weapon down upon her head. After this he shouldered the bar, and spoke to the King: "I have punished these for their evil counsel; I spare you because you are weak and not wicked. But, as you lent a foolish ear to slander, I deprive you of your throne. If there is anyone in this great city who cares to protest, I shall be glad to answer him with my bar. Indeed, I am quite prepared to convince the whole city, if she does not open her arms to my young master. Now depart quickly, O you who were King, for this iron is heavy and might fall." At this hint the old King scuttled down from the throne and, fleeing from the palace, joined his son Ali in the far retreat of his holy master.

As Prince Hasan and his wife Nūr al-Nihār had taken no part in the conspiracy, Prince Husain, now King of that city, gave them the finest province of his empire, and lived at cordial peace with them. The lovely Jinniyah lived for uncounted prosperous years with her sweet lord, and left behind a numerous posterity. But Allāh knows all!

## THE TALE OF PEARL-HARVEST

*And Shabrazād said to King Shabryār:*

It is related in the writings of the wise past that the Commander of the Faithful, al-Mutasid Billāh, sixth Khalīfah in the line of Abbās, grandson of al-Muta-wakkil, grandson of Hārūn al-Rashīd, was a prince of lofty soul and fearless heart. He was noble and beautiful, royal and intelligent, he had the courage and strength of lions, and a genius which made him the greatest poet of his time. He kept sixty zealous wazīrs about him in Baghdād to watch day and night over the welfare of his people; so that no trifle escaped him in all his mighty empire, from the desert of Shām to the Moorish confines, from the mountains of Khurāsān and the western sea to the furthest bounds of India and Afghanistan.

One day, as the Khalīfah was walking with Ahmad ibn Hamdūn, his intimate friend and chosen cup-companion (to whom we owe the oral transmission of the fairest tales and verses of our ancestors), he came to a lordly dwelling folded pleasantly among gardens. Its harmonious architecture said more of its owner's fine taste than the tongue of an eager friend, and to a man of the Khalīfah's subtle and attentive soul seemed eloquence itself.

As the two men sat down on a marble bench which faced the gate, to rest from their walking and breathe an air laden with the souls of jasmine and lily, they saw two youths of moon-like beauty coming towards them out of the shades of the garden. One was saying to the other: "Would that heaven might send some chance guests to our master on this delightful day. He is sad when he has to eat alone." "This is the first time that such a thing has happened", answered the second youth. "It is strange that no citizen has walked out to see our gardens on this fair Spring day."

These words astonished al-Mutasid in two particulars: that there should be a lord of high rank so near at hand whose name he did not



know, and that this lord should have so strange a taste as to dislike solitude. "I am the Khalifah", he said to himself, "and yet I often love to be alone. I would soon die if I had to feel some strange life for ever beating with mine. There is nothing so precious as occasional loneliness." Then to his companion he said: "O Hamdūn, O honey-tongued teller, surely you, who know the present as well as the past, have some knowledge of the man who owns this palace? Do you not think that we should make ourselves known to so strange a being? Do you not find this an occasion for proving that we also can be generous to a chance acquaintance?" "I do not think the Commander of the Faithful would ever regret a visit to this man", answered Hamdūn. "I will call those two delightful boys and tell them to announce our presence to their master." He left al-Mutasid sitting, in his usual disguise as a merchant, and went up to the youths, saying: "The blessing of Allāh be upon you! Tell your master that two strange merchants beg to be allowed to present their homage to him." The two boys ran joyfully to the palace, and very soon the master of that place appeared upon the threshold.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

HE was a man of kindly aspect and great elegance, with delicate features and a clear-cut face, dressed in a tunic of silk from Nisabūr, having a mantle of gold-fringed velvet over his shoulders and a ruby ring upon his finger. He came forward with a smile of welcome and pressed his left hand to his heart, saying: "Cordial greeting to the kind lords who honour us with supreme favour of their coming!"

He then led them into his palace, and they supposed that they were straying among the chambers of Paradise, for the interior

beauty of that place was greater than the exterior, and would have made a tortured lover forget love.

In the guest hall a little garden was mirrored by singing diamonds of water which fell into an alabaster basin; from its very smallness it was an enchantment and a cool delight. For if the great gardens belted that palace with all the flowers and green leaves of Allāh in a bright riot which was near to folly, the little garden was the very wisdom of flowering things. It held four blossoms only; but the like of those blossoms has not been seen since the first innocence of time.

The first was a rose lolling upon her stem; not a rose of rose trees, but the rose of the world, sister of the rose which flowered in Eden before the coming of the angry sword: a flame of red gold, a glowing fire of joy, a velvet virginal blood-tinted cloud. Its heart burned with the purple of a king's robe and its scent upon the breeze opened the fans of the heart, saying to the soul: "Be drunk!" and to the body: "Here are wings!"

The second was a tulip, tall and lonely; not the tulip of a Sultān's terrace, but the tulip of fable, fed on the blood of dragons in Many-Columned Irām. Its colour said to a cup filled with old wine: "Their lips do not touch me and yet I madden them!" and to a flaming coal: "Lo, I am not consumed!"

The third was a straight hyacinth; not of earth's gardens, but hyacinth, mother of lilies; a white fragility, saying to the swan: "Return to the water, for I am queen!"

The fourth was a carnation leaning lonely; not such as young girls water at evening, but an incandescent bubble, a fragment torn from the western sun, a crystal holding the soul of peppers; brother to that carnation which the King of the Jinn gave to Sālainmān to lie in the hair of Bilkīs; from which our Lord made the Elixir of long life, the spiritual Balm, the royal al-Kilā, the Theriac.

Even when the diamond of the fountain was still, the water moved a little in emotion to reflect these flowers.

ARABIAN LOVE TALES

There was nothing to take the eye in that hall of white marble save these flowers; but the eye was satisfied.

The Khalifah and his friend sat upon a couch covered with the carpets of Khurāsān, and fed exquisitely from heavy gold plate upon low bamboo tables. It was a feast of friends, made gay by the coming of four girls: a lutanist, a cymbal player, a singer and a dancer. While these concerted a harmonious entertainment, the host and his guests drank wine and ate fresh fruit.

Though Ibn Hamdūn, the teller of tales, was used to the sumptuous entertainments of his master, the generous wines and chosen beauty of that place inspired him to make a song about a certain youth who was a friend of his. In his fine voice, he sang:

*Idol carved by Chinese hands  
From a wild-rose, leave your lazy  
Lace couching, eyes of jade.  
Pour me out the young undying  
Tulip-covered wine from Chinese places.*

*Pour it laughing to the cup,  
Laughing in the lips of folly,  
Yet as pure as your boy's heart;  
I will set my mouth to drinking,  
Sucking blood from the black throats of wineskins.*

*Tell a man who was born drunk  
Wine's betraying? Never do so.  
(As the curling of your hair  
My desires are complicated.)  
Bad for poets? While the sky's blue tunic*

*Hangs at the green door of earth?  
I will drown myself in wine baths;*

## TALE OF PEARL-HARVEST

*When they smell the scarlet rose  
From my heart below the meadow,  
Pretty weeping boys shall laugh home reeling.*

When he had made an end, he looked to the Khalifah for a smile of pleasure, but saw his face so filled with anger that he dropped his cup of wine. Fearing lest he had mortally offended in some way, he ventured a second glance, and was relieved to see that his master did not appear to have heard the song, but to have been occupied during the singing with some deep problem of the mind. "As Allāh lives", he said to himself, "he was delighted a minute ago, yet now a blacker storm is brewing than I have ever seen before. Allāh preserve us all!"

While Hamdūn continued to speculate on the cause of this sudden anger, the Khalifah cast an offended glance at his host and cried, in defiance of all the laws of hospitality: "Who are you, O man?" The host turned pale, and answered: "I am usually called Abū al-Hasan Alī ibn Ahmad of Khurāsān." "And do you know who I am?" asked the Khalifah. "I have not that honour, my master", replied the man, turning paler still.

At this point Ibn Hamdūn rose, and said to the youth: "O host, you are in the presence of the Commander of the Faithful, the Khalifah al-Mutasid Billāh, grandson of al-Mutawakkil Alā Allāh."

The master of the house fell trembling to the ground and kissed the earth between the Khalifah's hands, saying: "O Khalifah, O Prince of Believers, I conjure you, by the virtue of your pious ancestors, to pardon in your slave any lack of politeness, submission, or generosity which you may have found in him." "It is not of these things that I will complain", answered the Khalifah. "You have proved yourself a better host than many kings. I would have thanked you for your generous hospitality had I not suddenly discovered a most grave cause of anger." "Surely, my lord",

cried Abū al-Hasan, "you will not let the heaviness of your wrath overwhelm your servant and at the same time not tell him his fault?" Then said the Khalifah: "I have seen that all the furnishing of this house and all the garments which you wear carry the name of my grandfather, al-Mutawakkil Alā Allāh. Can you explain this thing? Have you dared to pillage the dwelling of my sacred ancestors? You have a choice between speech and death."

At these words their host smiled again and seemed relieved. "May the grace and protection of Allāh be upon you, my lord!" said he. "Truth is your inner garment, your outer garment is sincerity; therefore I shall speak without reticence and with perfect truth." "Be seated, then, and speak!" cried the Khalifah.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

So Abū al-Hasan sat down again, and said: "Know first, my lord, that I am not a king or a king's son, as one might suppose, nor in any way of royal blood; but the tale of my life is so strange that, if it were written with needles on the interior corner of an eye, yet would it serve as a lesson to the circumspect. Also, I make sure that, when you have heard all, the weight of your displeasure will be dispersed." Abū al-Hasan paused for a moment to collect his thoughts and then began:

Though not of noble birth, my father was the richest and most respected merchant in Baghdād, and I was his only son. He was not a merchant in one market only, but had a shop in all, and ever the finest; he had a shop among the druggists, among the changers, among the silk-merchants. Each shop had a clever salesman in charge, and also a private apartment at the back in which my father could take his ease during the heat of the day. It was his custom to sleep, with a slave fanning him, and he gave special in-

struction to the youth to direct the air upon his testicles, which were very sensitive to the heat.

As I was his only and much loved son, my father denied me nothing and spared no expense in my education. His riches increased year by year and had become past counting when he died. May Allāh cover him with His mercy, and admit him into His peace! May He add the days which my father lost to the span of the Khalifah.

When I inherited my wealth, I carried on my father's shops as he had done, eating and drinking of the best, amusing myself with chosen friends and making life as happy for others as for myself. That is why my gaiety was without bitterness and felt no need of change. That which some call ambition, and some call glory, and some call fame, and some call noise, was insupportable to me. To such a thing I preferred myself, and calm, and my sweet-faced friends.

But no life, however clear and simple, is free from a menace of complication; and complication entered my life under the most desirable of all forms: a girl of fourteen, borrowing the face and form of a fourteen-year-old boy. It was such an apparition which sealed my thoughts for ever.

One day, as I sat before one of my shops and talked of this, that and the other with my friends, a dancing, smiling little girl stopped before me and threw one glance at me from Babylonian eyes. My soul and body shivered as at the first coming of happiness. "Does this shop belong to Abū al-Hasan ibn Ahmad of Khurāsān?" asked the child in a voice like running water. She stood slim before me and I could see that her tiny mouth beneath the muslin veil was as a purple flower in which white hail has fallen. "This is the shop of your slave", I answered, rising in her honour; and my friends discreetly withdrew.

The girl came into the shop, dragging my soul at her heels; she sat like a queen on the couch, and asked: "Where is he?" My

tongue was forked with emotion, but I babbled: "I am he." "Tell your lad to count me out three hundred *dīnārs*", she said, smiling with the smile of her mouth. I turned instantly to my first cashier and ordered him to weigh out the money; when he had done so, the girl rose and left me without thanks or farewell. But more than ever she dragged my soul at her heels.

"Dear master, in whose name shall I write the money?" asked my lad respectfully. "How should I know?" I answered. "Do the names of the *hūrīs* appear in account books? If you like you can write: *Three hundred dīnārs advanced to the Queen of Hearts.*" "I see that my master is testing me", cried the cashier. "I will run after her and ask her name." He ran zealously from the shop, but presently returned, holding his hand over his left eye and weeping bitterly. "What is the matter?" I asked, as he sat down in his place and wiped his cheeks. "Far be the Evil One!" he replied. "I ran after the young lady, meaning to ask her name; but, when she knew that she was followed, she turned round and hit me in the left eye with her fist. She nearly drove it into my head; she is stronger than a blacksmith!"

Glory be to Allāh Who has given such prompt strength to the little light hands of love!

All day my soul lay in chains of memory, both tortured and refreshed. Next morning the girl came smiling again. As I would have greeted her, she interrupted me, saying: "Have you not been thinking of me as a little baggage who played a trick on you for what she could get out of it?" "The name of Allāh be upon you and about you, O queen!" I answered. "You but took your own property; this shop and all which it contains belongs to you. Among the least of your goods I count myself." At this the girl raised her little face veil and, bending like a rose on a lily's stem, sat down laughing, with a tinkle of bracelets and sighing of silks. It was as if a breeze from all the gardens of Baghdād had come with her. "If that is so, O Abū al-Hasan", she said, "let me have

five hundred dinārs." I had the money paid over to her, and she departed without a word. For the rest of that day I lay, a doubting prisoner in a web of sorcery. On the next day, as I sat pale and inactive in my place, she came again, with long eyes of darkness and flame, and small infatuating smile. This time she said no word, but, pointing to a square of velvet on which hung certain inestimable jewels, a little broadened her smile. At once I took down the velvet square and, folding it up with its contents, handed it to the sorceress, who took it and departed.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

SEEING her thus depart a third time, I could no longer consent to inaction, so, overcoming a natural fear lest I might meet with the same rebuff as my cashier, I rose and followed her. When she reached Tigris bank, she embarked in a small skiff, which was rowed by rapid oarsmen to a marble palace: the palace of the Prince of Believers, al-Mutawakkil, your grandfather, my lord. This sight disquieted me, and I said to myself: "At last, O Abū al-Hasan, you have found an adventure and are carried into the mill of complication." In spite of myself I recalled the words of the poet:

*Her small white arms are softer for your brow  
Than a swan's feathers. Oh, be careful now!*

I gazed pensively for a long time upon the water and seemed to see the calm monotony of my past life reflected in the stream of boats which were borne down by the current; but suddenly I noticed that the purple skiff lay moored at the marble stairs, bereft of men. "Are you not ashamed of this sleepy life, O Abū al-Hasan?" I



cried. "How dare you hesitate before the burning hours of complication? Surely, another poet has said:

*The rose of life is wearying by your bed,  
Half drowsy with your sleep:  
O lover, rise and touch the crimson hours.  
It will be time enough to sleep  
When she is dead,  
As die she must although you spare her flowers."*

Stirred by these lines, I determined to lose no chance of reaching the girl, now that I knew the place of her dwelling. As a preliminary, I hastened home and told my dear mother all my troubles. "Allāh protect you, my child!" said she. "Will you endanger the calm passage of our lives with the turbulence of complication? If this girl lives at the palace, you will be lost if you attempt to follow her. I conjure you, by the nine months in which I nourished your blind life, to forget this unknown creature." "Calm your dear soul and refresh your eyes, my mother", I answered. "Nothing will happen which is not fated to happen, and Allāh knows all!"

Next morning, at my shop in the jewellers' market, I received a visit from the manager who guarded my interest among the druggists, an old man in whom my father had had unlimited confidence. After we had greeted, he said: "Why this sudden change of colour, good sir? Why this woeful countenance? Allāh protect us all from bad bargains! But I see that you are in good health; therefore I cannot suppose that your trouble is without remedy." "I have not been making any bad bargains, dear uncle", I answered. "My life has changed its aspect, that is all; complication has set in upon it with the passing of a little girl." Then I told the old man what had happened, describing the ravisher of my soul as if she stood before me.

"It is a complication indeed!" exclaimed the sheikh, after

reflection. "But it does not take this old slave out of his depth. I have a friend in the palace itself, a tailor who makes for the eunuchs and officers of the court; I will introduce you to him and, if you give him some work at handsome pay, I warrant he will be of use to you." He led me straight to the palace and conducted me to the apartment of his friend the tailor, who received us affably. To begin my employment of him, I showed him one of my pockets, which I had been careful to tear out as we walked, and begged him to sew it in at once. When he had dexterously done so, I slipped ten gold dīnārs into his hand, promising that I would reward him more generously in the future. He looked at me stupidly, and then replied: "You are dressed as a merchant, my master, but you do not behave like one. A merchant would not have given a dirham unless my work had been worth ten; and you have paid the price of an amir's robe. Surely only lovers act so strangely. Are you in love, my lord?" "How would I not be in love", said I, lowering my eyes, "when I have seen what I have seen?" "Fawn or gazelle?" he asked. "Gazelle", I replied. "This should be easy", said he, "you will find me a good guide to the gazelles in this palace. What is her name?" "Allāh alone knows", I answered, "unless you do." "Describe her", said he. So I began describing her as well as I might, until he cried: "As Allāh lives, it is Pearl-Harvest, the Khali-fah's lute-player! . . . I see her little eunuch coming even now; make the most of the meeting, my lord."

As he spoke, a small white slave, as beautiful as the crescent moon of Ramadān, came into the apartment and saluted us most sweetly. He pointed out a little brocaded vest, saying: "How much is this, O sheikh Ali? I need it very much, because I must walk abroad with my mistress, Pearl-Harvest." At once I took the vest down from its place and gave it to the child, saying: "It is already paid for." The boy looked at me with a sidelong smile, just like his mistress, and then led me apart by the hand, saying: "You must be Abū al-Hasan ibn Ahmad of Khurāsān." Being astonished to find

so much sagacity in one so young, I took a costly ring from my finger and slipped it upon his thumb, as I answered: "You are right in your guess, my charming lad, but who told you my name?" "Why should I not know it?" he retorted. "I hear my mistress saying it fifty times a day. She is in love with someone whom she calls Abū al-Hasan Ali, the noble lord. I swear by the virtues of the Prophet (upon whom be all grace and benediction!) that, if you are as much in love as she, I will help you with all my might to come into her presence."

When I had sworn to this child that I loved his mistress to distraction and would die if I did not behold her at once, he comforted me, saying: "Now that I am sure of you, I am your slave. Wait here for a moment until I come back."

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

AFTER a few moments of absence, the little eunuch returned with a packet from which he took a linen tunic embroidered in fine gold, and a mantle among whose thread was worked, in letters of gold, the name of al-Mutawakkil Alā Allāh. "These are the garments which the Khalifah wears, when he goes at evening to his harīm", said the child, as he helped me into them. "As soon as you reach the long interior gallery, which contains the rooms of the favourites, you must take a grain of musk from this flask and place it before each door; for this is a custom of the Prince of Believers when he passes down that gallery. When you come to a threshold of blue marble, open the door above, without knocking, and you will find yourself in the arms of your mistress. As to your coming away afterwards, Allāh will provide." Then he wished me well in my enterprise, and disappeared.

Though I was not used to such adventures and was taking my

first step in complication, I saw to the fit of the Khalifah's garments and began walking through the courts and colonnades of the palace as if I had spent all my life among them. When I came to the long gallery of the harim, I drew the flask of musk from my pocket and placed a grain in the little porcelain plate which had been set, for that purpose, outside each door. I came at length to a threshold of blue marble and was about to open for my desire, when I heard a noise of persons coming behind me and saw the advancing glare of many torches. It was the Khalifah himself! I had not time to retreat, and, as I sped along the gallery, I heard the voices of two favourites talking afar. "As Allāh lives", said one, "the Prince of Believers is paying a second visit. He has just passed and left the usual grain of musk, and now he is coming again. Yet we recognised him the first time by the smell of his garments."

I could not halt in my flight because the noise of the Sultān's escort still approached; I could not continue to run on in that way without risking an alarm; so, forgetting my disguise, I chose a door at random and fled through it. I found myself in the presence of a girl with long affrighted eyes, who jumped from the carpets on which she lay and quickly covered her face and hair with the hem of her robe.

I stood gazing at her like a fool, wishing that the floor would open and swallow me, and cursing that detestable little eunuch in my heart. I had resigned myself to death, either by drowning or impaling, and held my breath for the terrified cries which would bring my executioners upon me, when the young lips moved beneath their muslin shield, and a charming voice spoke low to me: "Be welcome to my apartment, O Abū al-Hasan, for you love my sister Pearl-Harvest and she loves you." I threw myself face downwards before the girl and covered my head with her protecting veil, kissing it the while. "Welcome and long life to generous men!" she said. "You have come out very well from the proofs which my sister set you. She talks of nothing but her love for you.

You may thank a kind Destiny which led you to me, instead of leading you to death. Have no fear for yourself now, for I promise that your future shall bear the seal of happiness." I continued to kiss her veil in silence, and she went on: "But before I interfere on your behalf, O Abū al-Hasan, I wish to be quite sure of your intention with regard to my sister. There must be no misunderstanding in that matter." I lifted my arms on high, and answered: "May Allāh guard and guide you, O mistress of my help! I swear by your sweet life that my intention is both pure and disinterested. I have but one desire in the world: to see your blest sister again, that the sight of her eyes may still the beating of this heart. As Allāh is my witness, it is only this and nothing more." "In that case, O Abū al-Hasan", she said, "I will lead you to the lawful goal of your desires."

She clapped her hands, and said to the little slave who appeared upon that signal: "Find my sister Pearl-Harvest, and say to her: 'My mistress, Sweet-Almond, sends greeting and begs you to come to her without delay as she is sad to-night, and also has a secret for your ear.'" The little slave hastened away with this message.

And soon, my lord, Pearl-Harvest entered in her beauty, in her light grace, wearing for sole garment a blue silk veil, and walking upon naked feet.

At first she did not see me, and said to her sister: "Here I am, dearest. I came straight from the hammām and did not take the time to dress. Tell me your secret quickly." By way of answer, Sweet-Almond beckoned me from the shadows.

When she saw me, my dear love showed neither shame nor embarrassment but came to me, white and breathing and warm, and threw herself into my arms, as a child flies to the embrace of its mother. I held all the girls of Paradise against my heart, together with the melting delight of fine butter and a paste of almond. My arm scarcely dared press upon that childish body; a hundred years of new life came to me with that kiss.

## TALE OF PEARL-HARVEST

I know not how long we clasped each other; for I was in a trance of ecstasy, or close to it.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

SOON I came a little to myself and was about to tell the girl how I had suffered for love of her, when we heard the noise of voices approaching down the gallery. I had hardly time to hide myself in a large chest, which the two sisters fastened upon me, when the Khalifah himself entered to visit Sweet-Almond.

When your grandfather saw Pearl-Harvest, he said to her: "I am rejoiced to meet you in your sister's room like this. Where have you been these last days? Why have I not seen you in any part of the palace? Why have I not heard that voice in which I take delight? Take your lute now and sing me a song of passion." Pearl-Harvest knew that the Khalifah was deeply in love with a young slave named Banjah, but she was herself too moved to find an appropriate song; she could only give free course to her own heart, and sing:

*My joy, O night,  
Was washed, O starry eyes,  
In roses, joy, my joy.  
My flesh, O night,  
Had eyes, O starry eyes,  
To snare, joy, O my joy,  
The kings, O night,  
Of Babylon, O starry eyes.  
Such was my joy, my joy,  
Such was my joy.*

When the Khalifah al-Mutawakkil heard this song, his heart was gladdened and he said to Pearl-Harvest: "O girl of benediction, mouth of nightingale, express a wish and it shall be granted, even were it for the half of my kingdom." Pearl-Harvest lowered her eyes, as she answered: "May Allāh preserve the life of our master! I have no wish save that the Commander of the Faithful may continue to look kindly upon me and upon my sister." "You must ask something more than that, O Pearl-Harvest", said the Khalifah kindly; so she spoke again: "Since our master commands me, I ask to be set free, and given as a present all the furnishing and contents of this room." "It is yours!" cried the Khalifah. "Sweet-Almond shall have the finest pavilion in the palace instead of it. You are free now, and may go or stay according to your wish." With that the Khalifah left us and went forward towards the apartment of young Banjah.

When we were alone, my love sent a eunuch to fetch porters and dismantlers, and had all the contents of that room, with stuffs, coffers and carpets, carried to my house. The first article of furniture to go, you may be sure, was the chest in which I lay.

That same day I married Pearl-Harvest before Allāh, in the presence of the kādī and witnesses, and the rest is a mystery of our Faith.

Such, O my Lord, is the story of this furniture and these garments, marked with the glorious name of your grandfather. I have neither added nor taken away a syllable of the truth. The Commander of the Faithful is the fountain of all generosity and of all goodness!

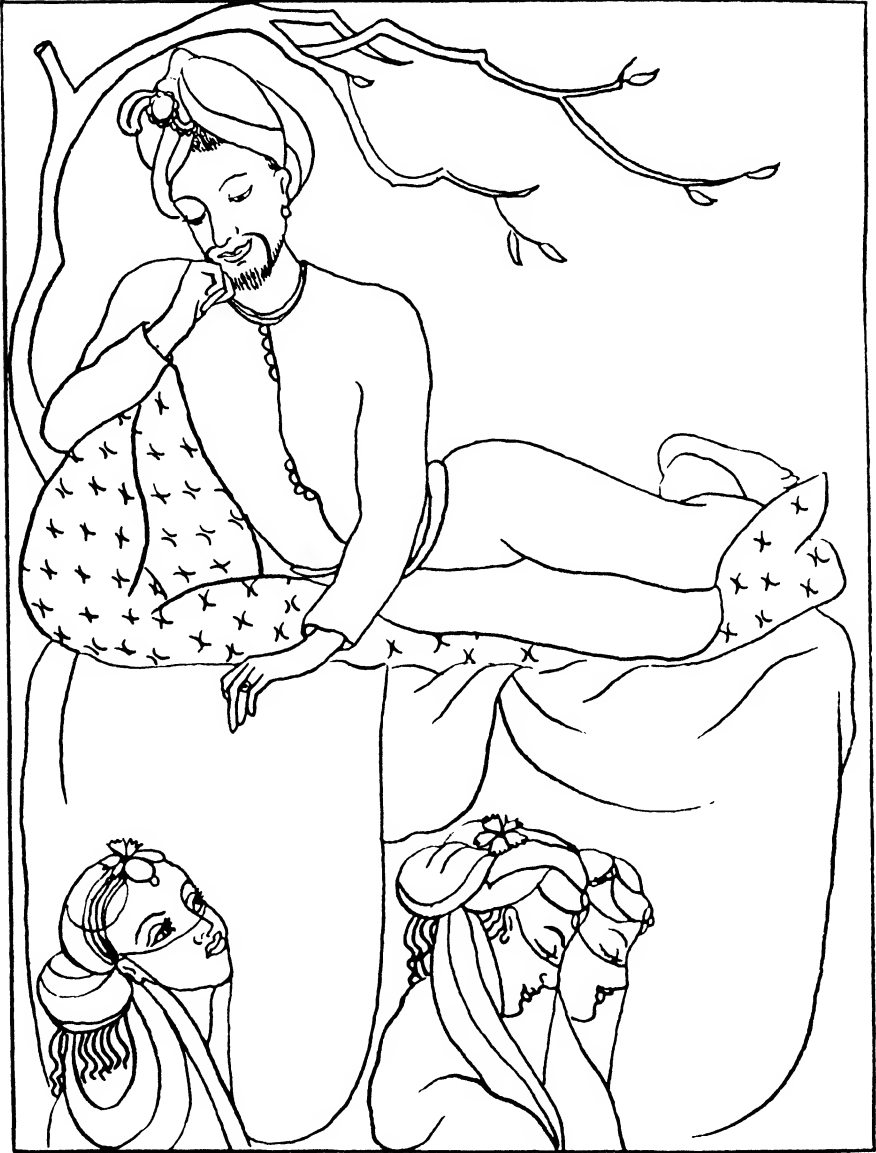
Abū al-Hasan fell silent and the Khalifah al-Mutasid Billāh cried in joy: "Upon your tongue is the honey of eloquence and your tale is a tale of marvel. Bring me pen and paper, I pray, that I may reward you according to your merits." When pen and paper were brought, the Khalifah handed them to Ibn Hamdūn, the tale teller, and made him write: "In the name of Allāh, the Merciful, the Compassionate! Be it known by this firmān, signed by our hand

## TALE OF PEARL-HARVEST

and sealed with our seal, that we exempt our faithful subject, Abū al-Hasan Ali ibn Ahmad of Khurāsān, from all taxes during the rest of his life. Also we make him our principal chamberlain." When he had signed and sealed the firmān, he handed it to Abū al-Hasan, saying: "I desire to see you often at my palace, as cup-companion and good friend."

After that, Abū al-Hasan was never separated from the Khalifah; the two lived in all delight until that inevitable separation, which hurries those who have dwelt in palaces to dwell in tombs. But glory be to Him Who lives in a palace which is above the winds of Destiny!





## THE CHICK-PEA SELLER'S DAUGHTER

*But when the night had come, Shabrazād said:*

It is related that there was once, in the city of Cairo, an honest and respectable chick-pea seller, to whom Allāh had given three daughters. Though such could not usually be counted a blessing, the hawker received them with resignation and loved them dearly. This was the more easy as they were all as beautiful as moons, and as the youngest, who was called Zainah, was also an epitome of intelligence and charm.

The good man, wishing to fit them by education for a marriage above his own peripatetic class, spared every penny that he could afford for their teaching, and they would go every morning to learn embroidery upon silk and velvet from a mistress in that art.

Their way lay beneath the window of the Sultān's only son and, as they passed it each morning, a royal allurement with six Babylonian eyes snaring behind the little face veils, the youth would cry provocatively from his window: "Greeting to the chick-pea seller's daughters! Greeting to the three straight letters!" The eldest and the next would answer with a light smile of their eyes, but the youngest would pass on without even lifting her head. Yet if the Sultān's son went further, asking, it may be, news of chick-peas and the current price of chick-peas and details of the sale of chick-peas and whether chick-peas in the abstract were good or bad, it was always Zainah who answered, without looking up: "And what have you to do with chick-peas, old pick-cheese?" and the three would hurry laughing upon their way.

The prince, who had grown to love little Zainah, grieved bitterly at her coldness and irony. One day, when she had mocked him more than usual, he realised that he would obtain nothing by his gallantry, and determined to punish the child through her father, whom he knew she greatly loved. "She shall feel my power at last", he said.

As he was the Sultān's heir and had power over the people, he

called the chick-pea seller to him, saying: "You are the father of those three girls?" "I am, my lord", answered the trembling hawker, and the prince continued: "To-morrow morning at the hour of prayer, I require you to return here, at the same time dressed and naked, laughing and weeping at the same time, and at the same time riding and walking. If you come as you are, or fail in only one of the conditions, your head shall answer for it!" The poor chick-pea seller kissed the earth and departed, complaining bitterly to himself that his fate was sealed.

He came back into the presence of his daughters with the sack of his stomach turned upon him and his nose trailing to the ground. The girls noticed his perplexity and little Zainah asked the reason of it. "My child", he answered, "a calamity has come upon me and my breast is straitened with sorrow." Then he told her of his interview with the prince in all its details; but nothing would be gained by repeating them in this place.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

ZAINAH heard her father through to the end and then exclaimed, with a laugh: "Is that all, dear father? If you follow my advice in this matter, you need have no fear at all. Also we shall make that silly prince burst from disappointment. To fulfil the first condition, you have only to borrow a net from our neighbour, the fisherman, and I will make you a garment of it to wear without anything else. Thus you will be clothed and naked at the same time.

"For the second condition, you must take an onion with you to the palace and rub your eyes with it on the threshold; then you will be able to laugh and weep at the same time.

"The third condition is just as easy to satisfy, dear father. You

## THE CHICK-PEA SELLER'S DAUGHTER

have only to go to our neighbour, the donkey, boy, and borrow his little ass's foal. Then you can enter the presence of that young ruffian with the foal between your legs and your feet touching the ground; that is to say, both riding and walking. Such is my advice; but Allāh knows all!"

The chick-pea seller kissed Zainah between the eyes, saying: "O daughter of your father and mother, who has such children does not die! Glory be to Him Who has planted so much intelligence behind your brow and such sagacity within your soul!" The world grew white before his eyes, care fled from his heart, and the fans of his bosom ceased from contracting. He ate and drank, and then went forth to make the preparations which his daughter had suggested.

Next morning the chick-pea seller entered the palace, clothed and naked, laughing and weeping, riding and walking, while the frightened ass's colt brayed and farted among all the royal company. The prince felt his gall bladder like to burst against his liver, but he was obliged to send the hawker away in safety. At the same time he swore to be revenged, this time upon the girl herself. We will leave him cudgelling his brains for a plan, and return to young Zainah.

As she had a far-seeing eye and a nose for the future, she foresaw that the prince's next move would be against herself. "Better attack than wait to be attacked", she said, and straightway went forth to the shop of a clever armourer. After greeting, she said: "O father of skilful hands, I wish you to make me a complete suit of armour all in steel, with thigh pieces, armlets, and helmet of the same. And you must so construct it that, at the least movement or touch, each piece will make a deafening noise and terrifying clatter." The armourer set to work at once and, in a short time, delivered exactly the suit which the young girl required.

When night fell, Zainah terribly disguised herself in her iron garment, provided herself with a pair of scissors and a razor, and, taking up a large pitchfork, made her way towards the palace.

As she came along the road, the door-keepers and guards fled in all directions; as she passed into the palace, the slaves and eunuchs, terrified by her appearance, scurried into dark holes and corners, and remained. Thus she was able to pass through corridors and come to that chamber to which the prince had retired for the night.

The young man, hearing the frightful noise of the armour and seeing the wearer of it in the half-light, supposed that some Ifrit had come for his soul. His face became yellow, his teeth chattered, and he fell to the floor, crying: "Spare me, spare me, O powerful Ifrit, and Allāh shall spare you!" "Keep your lips and jaws very, very still, O pimp!" answered the chick-pea seller's daughter in a voice of thunder. "Otherwise I will thrust this fork into your eye!" The prince breathed no more words and lay without movement or resistance, while the girl shaved the half of his young moustaches, the left side of his beard, the right side of his head, and both his eyebrows. Then she rubbed his face with ass's dung and slipped a portion into his mouth. Finally she left as she had come, for no man dared to bar her way. As soon as she reached home, she hid away her armour and, lying down beside her sisters, fell into a deep sleep.

The next day, as usual, the three sisters, well washed, coifed, and dressed, left for the house of their embroidery mistress and passed under the prince's window. He sat there, in his daily position, but his face and head were muffed up in silk, so that only his eyes were visible. Contrary to their custom, the three looked at him with insistent coquetry, so that he said to himself: "I think that I am taming them at last. It must be that my eyes are more attractive when the rest is hidden." "O three straight letters", he called down to them, "O daughters of my heart, how are the chick-peas this morning?" The youngest lifted her head and answered for her sisters: "Greeting, O muffle-face! How are the beard and moustaches this morning? How are the lovely eyebrows? And did you

## THE CHICK-PEA SELLER'S DAUGHTER

like the taste of ass's dung, my dear? May it have been delicious in digestion!"

Then the three girls broke into laughter and ran on, with mocking and exciting gestures.

The prince understood that the Ifrit of the night before had been little Zainah; he felt his gall bladder rising to his nose, and swore that he would be even with the girl or die. He waited until his beard, moustaches, brows and hair had grown again and then sent for the chick-pea seller, to whom he said: "O man, I wish you to give me the hand of your third daughter in marriage, for my heart is lost to her. If you dare to refuse your head shall answer for it." "It is permitted", answered the hawker, "but I pray that our master, the prince, will allow me time to consult the child before I finally consent." "Certainly, ask her permission", cried the prince, "but remember that her refusal will mean a black death for both of you."

The unfortunate man hurried home and told his daughter of the prince's command; but she laughed, saying: "As Allāh lives, there is no calamity in that! This marriage will be a godsend to us all. I consent most readily."

The chick-pea seller returned to the palace with this answer, and the Sultān's son rejoiced. Again we will leave him, this time making preparations for the marriage, and return to Zainah.

As soon as her father left the house, she hastened to the shop of an expert confectioner, whose chief skill was in the manufacture of sugar dolls. "O father of light fingers", she said, "I wish a sugar doll which shall be a life-sized portrait of myself, with hair of spun candy, deep black eyes, a little mouth, a small pretty nose, long lashes, and all that is fitting in other places." Straightway the confectioner collected his material and made so wonderful a resemblance of Zainah, that it only lacked speech for its humanity.

When the night of penetration came, Zainah dressed the doll in her own chemise, laid it with the help of her sisters in the bed, and

lowered the light curtain about it. Then she gave final instruction to the others, and hid herself behind the bed.

As soon as it was time, the two sisters went for the bridegroom and introduced him into the marriage chamber. They gave him the usual wishes and recommendations: "She is delicate! We trust her to you! She is gentle and sweet, you will have no fault to find!" and then retired.

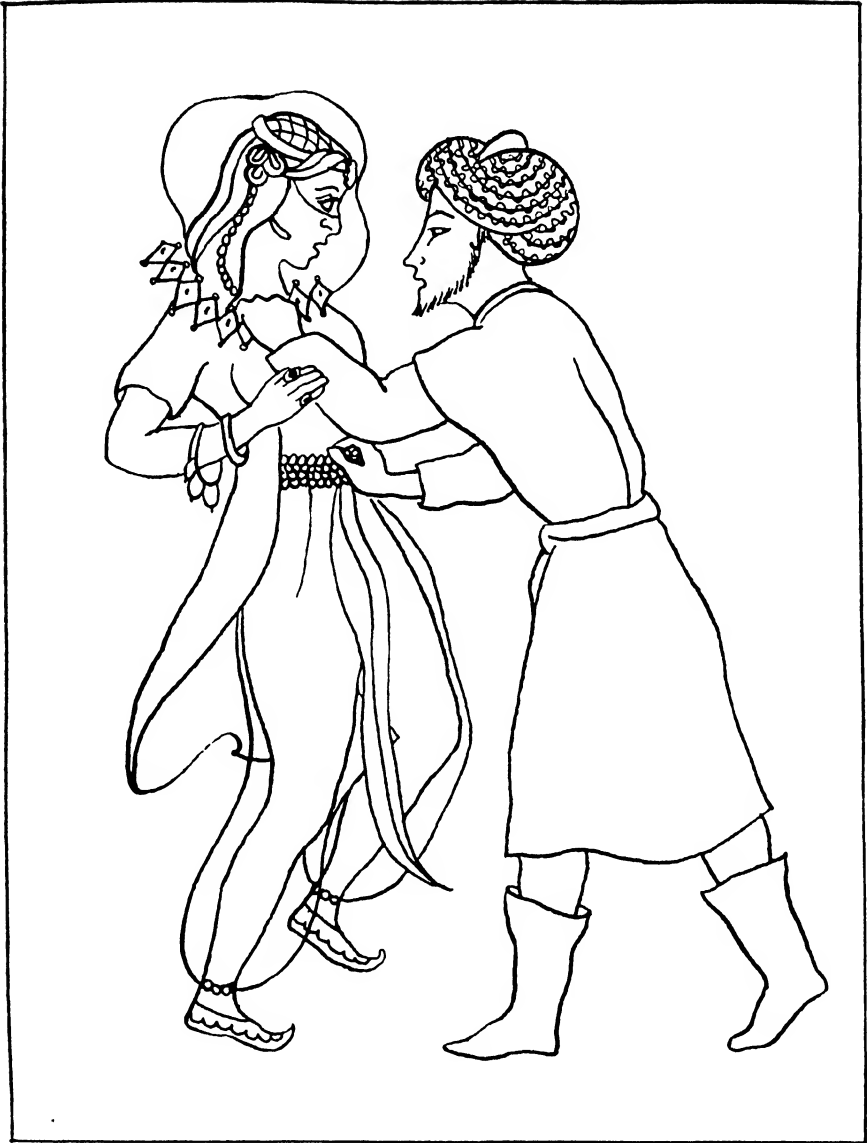
The Sultān's son, as he stood by the bed, remembered all the slights which his bride had put upon him and all the angers which he had felt against her. With a quick movement he unsheathed his great sword and struck at the body through the curtain, so strongly that the head flew into pieces. One morsel entered his mouth, open for cursing, and the sweetness of its taste astonished him. "By my life", he cried, "though she gave me ass's dung to eat, she is passing sweet in death!"

Racked with remorse, he would have passed the sword through his own belly, but little Zainah slipped from her hiding-place and held his arms from behind, embracing him and saying: "If we forgive each other, Allāh will forgive us both!"

The prince forgot his rancour when he saw the exquisite smiling of the child. He pardoned her and loved her, and they lived in all delight, leaving a numberless posterity behind them.







## A CONTEST IN GENEROSITY

*But when the night had come, Shabrazād said:*

It is related that there were once in Baghdād a girl and boy who were cousins and had greatly loved each other from infancy. Their fathers and mothers had destined them for each other and would often say: "When Habīb is big he shall marry Habībah." The two had grown up together and their love had grown with them, but when they came to marriageable age, they were not destined to wed each other; for the girl's parents had suffered the reverse of time and were now so poor that they were obliged to accept the suit of a certain respectable sheikh, one of the richest merchants in Baghdād, when he asked for their daughter's hand.

After the marriage had been arranged, young Habībah sought out her cousin Habīb for the last time, and said to him through her tears: "O my beloved, you have heard that my father and mother have given me to a sheikh whom I have never seen, and our love is frustrate for ever. Would not death be preferable?" "Our Destiny is bitter; there is no meaning in our life henceforward", answered Habīb sobbing. "How shall we ever again savour the taste of life or delight in the beauties of the world? Alas, alas, sweet cousin, how shall we bear the weight of Destiny?" They wept together and were well-nigh swooning from unhappiness, when one appeared to separate them and tell the girl the time had come for her to be taken to her husband's house.

The desolate Habībah was carried in procession to the sheikh's house and there, after the usual blessings and wishings, left alone with him.

When the moment of consummation came, the old man entered the bridal chamber and found his wife weeping among the cushions, her bosom shaken with sobs. "Surely she weeps after the manner of young girls, because she has left her mother", thought the sheikh.

“Happily that does not last long. The stiffest bolt will yield to oil, and a kind word will tame a lion’s cub.” So he went up to her, saying: “O Habībah, O light of my soul, why do you destroy the beauty of your eyes? What grief is this which makes you forget that I am near you?” The girl redoubled her tears and sighs when she heard his voice, and thrust her head further among the cushions. “Dear Habībah”, said the old man gently, “if you are weeping for your mother, say so, and I will fetch her to you instantly.” The girl shook her head among the cushions, and the old bridegroom went on: “If you are weeping for your father, or one of your sisters, or your nurse, or some pet animal, such as a cock, a cat, or a gazelle, tell me, and you shall be no longer separated from your desire.” A shake of the head was the bride’s only answer. The sheikh pondered for a moment, and then said again: “Is it the house itself for which you weep, Habībah, the house where you were young? If that is so, I will take you back there at once.” A little won over by her husband’s kindness, Habībah lifted her tear-wet eyes and her cheeks with their fevered roses. In a small and trembling voice she answered: “My lord, I do not weep for my mother, my father, my sisters, my nurse, or my pets; and I beg you not to insist that I shall tell you the reason of my tears.” The excellent sheikh, seeing her face for the first time, was softened indeed by her beauty, her childish charm, and the music of her voice. “O fairest girl on earth, dearest Habībah, since the cause of your weeping is none of these things”, said he, “I beg you all the more to tell me of it.” “I cannot tell you of it”, she answered, and he went on: “Then I know what it is: you weep because I am repugnant to you. If you had only told me through your mother that you did not wish to marry me, I should never have forced you into my house.” “No, by Allāh”, cried the girl, “I have no aversion from you. How could one whom I have never seen be repugnant to me? It is something else, for which I can find no words.” But the old man pressed her so kindly that at last she confessed with lowered eyes: “My grief and tears

are for a dear one of my house, a cousin with whom I grew up, a cousin who loves me and whom I love. O my master, love's roots are in the heart and, if love is plucked forth, the heart is plucked forth also."

The sheikh lowered his head without speaking and reflected for an hour, then he raised his head, saying: "Dear mistress, the law of Allāh and His Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) forbids one Believer to snatch even a mouthful of bread from another Believer by force. How then could I, a Believer, snatch away your heart? Calm your dear soul and refresh your eyes, for nothing shall happen to you that is not written in your Destiny. Rise up now, O my bride of a minute, and go, with my full and free consent, to him whose right in you is more than mine. Give yourself to him freely and return here in the morning before the servants are awake. From henceforth you are my daughter, of my own flesh and blood, and a father does not touch his daughter carnally. When I am dead, you shall be my heir. Rise up now, my girl, and hasten to console your cousin, for he must be weeping as the dead weep."

He raised her, dressed her himself in the fair robes and jewels of her marriage, and accompanied her to the door. As she walked into the street and started upon her way, she glowed like an extravagantly ornamented idol, such as the unbelievers carry on their feast days.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

SHE had hardly gone twenty paces down the deserted street when a black form fell upon her from the shadows, and a night-haunting thief, who had been attracted by the sparkle of her gems, began to snatch them from her,

growling: "If you open your mouth, I will smash you to the earth." His hand was already fumbling with the collars about her neck when his eyes fell upon her face. "As Allāh lives", he cried, "she is the richest jewel of them all, I must take her whole! . . . Dear mistress, I will do you no harm if you are complaisant, and I can promise you a blessed night if you will come with me. . . . She must be the wedding guest of some great lord to wear such things at night!"

When the girl wept, the robber cried: "Why do you weep, my dear? I swear that I will neither hurt you nor rob you, if you give yourself to me freely." At the same time he took her by the hand and would have led her off; but she found the courage to tell him who she was, how generous the sheikh had been, and the full details of her marriage. "Now, when all was going well, I have fallen into your hands. Do with me as you will", she said.

The robber, who was by far the most skilful craftsman in all the corporation of the city thieves, had sense enough to appreciate the husband's generosity. He reflected for a moment, and then said: "Where does he live, this cousin whom you love?" "In a room on the garden in such a house in such a street", she answered. Then said the robber: "Dear mistress, no one shall ever accuse a man of my profession of interfering with true love. May Allāh grant the choicest of His blessings to the two of you this night! I will now lead you to your cousin's house, as you might fall in with some vile thief if you were to go alone. The wind is for all, the flute for one, and that one is not I."

So saying, he took the girl by the hand and escorted her, as if she had been a queen, right up to the house of her beloved. Then he took leave of her, kissing the hem of her garment, and went his way.

The girl walked across the garden and, listening at the window of her cousin's chamber, heard him sobbing alone. She knocked at the door, and a voice filled with tears asked who was there.

## THE TALE OF THE SEA ROSE OF THE GIRL OF CHINA

*But when the night had come, Shahrazād said:*

It is related, O King of time, that there was once in a certain land of Sharkastān,—but Allāh on high knows all!—a King called Zain al-Mulūk, whose fame had gone out to the horizons of the world and who was the very brother of lions for valour and generosity. Though he was still young, he had two upstanding sons already, and a time came when, by the grace of Allāh, a third was born to him, a child picked out among ten thousand, whose beauty dispelled the shadows as a girl moon at her full dispels them. As the boy's years increased, his eyes, those cups of drunkenness, troubled the wise with the sweet fires of their regard, his lashes shone like curved dagger blades, the curls of his musk black hair confused the heart like nard, his cheeks mocked the cheeks of young girls; his smiles were arrows, he walked nobly and daintily; the sun had dexterously painted a freckle on the left commissure of his lips; his breast was smooth and white as a crystal tablet, and hid a lively heart.

Zain al-Mulūk delighted in his youngest son, and called together the court astrologers to cast his horoscope. They shook their sand and traced their figures in it; they murmured the major forms of divination, and then said to the King: "His lot is fortunate, and his star assures him infinite happiness. But it is written in his Destiny that if you, his father, look upon him in his boyhood, your sight shall be destroyed."

The world grew dark before the King's face; he had the child taken from his presence and ordered his wazīr to install him, with his mother, in a faraway palace, so that he might never chance to see him in his goings to and fro.

These things were done, and years passed in which this flower of the royal garden, under the delicate guidance of his mother,

blossomed in health and beauty. But no man may escape his Destiny, and a day came when young prince Nūrgihān mounted his horse and galloped after game in the forest. King Zain al-Mulūk had gone there also, hunting the deer, and, in spite of the many miles of trees, Fate willed that he should meet his son. He glanced at him, without recognition, and sight forsook his eyes. He became a prisoner in the kingdom of night.

Knowing, by this terrible proof, that the young rider must be his son, he wept and cried: "The eyes of all fathers become brighter when they behold their sons; but mine are blind, are blind!"

He called the great doctors of that time to his palace, physicians more skilful than Ibn Sīnā, and consulted them concerning his blindness. When they had questioned him and considered together, they declared that the King was not to be cured by ordinary means. "The one remedy is so difficult to come by", they said, "that we cannot advise our lord to dream of it. It is the sea rose of the girl of China."

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

AND they explained to the King that there dwelt in the far interior of China a princess, daughter of King Fīrūz-Shāh, who had in her garden the only known tree of that magic sea rose which could cure the sight, even of those who had been born blind.

At once Zain al-Mulūk sent heralds through his kingdom to announce that the man who brought the King the sea rose of the girl of China should receive half of the empire as a recompense.

Then he sat down to await the issue, weeping like Jacob, wasting like Job, and drinking the blood of his heart's either lobe.

Among those who set forth to seek the sea rose in China were

the king's two eldest sons, and young Prince Nūrgihān departed also. For he said to himself: "I wish to prove the gold of my Destiny on the touchstone of danger, and also, as I was the unwitting cause of my father's blindness, it is only right that I should risk my life to cure him."

Prince Nūrgihān, that son of the fourth sky, mounted his wind-swift courser at that hour when the moon, riding the black palfrey of the night, had pulled his bridle to the East.

He journeyed for days and months, across plains and deserts and through solitudes peopled only by wild grass and the presence of God, until he came to a limitless forest, darker than the wit of ignorance and so obscure that in it was neither night nor day, black nor white. But the prince's shining face lit up the shadows, and he advanced, with a heart of steel, among trees bearing living heads which grinned and laughed and fell as he passed by, and other trees whose fruits were earthen pots, which cracked and let out birds with golden eyes. Suddenly he found himself face to face with an old and mountainous Jinnī, seated on the trunk of an enormous carob. The youth saluted this figure, and dropped from the ruby casket of his mouth words which melted in the mind of the Ifrit like sugar in milk. Pleased by the boy's beauty, the giant bade him rest beside him; so Nūrgihān got down from his horse and, taking a cake of flour and melted butter from his food sack, offered it to his new acquaintance as a token of friendship. The Jinnī made one mouthful of it and then jumped for joy, saying: "This human food gives me more pleasure than an inheritance of that red sulphur which formed the stone of Sulaimān's ring! By Allāh, I am so delighted that, if each of my hairs turned to a hundred thousand tongues and each of those tongues were to sing your praise, the whole concert would fall short of the gratitude I feel. If you do not ask for some favour in return my heart will be as a porcelain plate dropped from a high terrace!"

Nūrgihān thanked the Jinnī for his engaging discourse, and



answered: "O chief and crown of all the Jinn, O careful guardian of the forest, since you permit me to express a wish, I ask you to take me without delay to the kingdom of Fīrūz-Shāh, for there I hope to pluck the sea rose of the girl of China."

When he heard these words, the guardian of the forest heaved a cold sigh, beat his head with his hand, and lost consciousness. The prince heaped the most delicate cares upon him but they were unavailing until he thought to place a second sugar-and-butter cake in the giant's mouth. At once the large eyes opened, and the Ifrit, with his mind troubled by the excellence of the cake and the difficulty of the wish which he had heard, said sorrowfully to Nūrgihān: "O my master, the sea rose of the royal girl of China is guarded by certain aerial Jinn, whose business it is, day and night, to prevent the birds from flying above it, to ward off the drops of rain from its cup, to forbid the sun to burn its petals. Even if I transport you to the garden, I do not see how we are to elude the vigilance of those guards, for they greatly love the sea rose. I am perplexed in the extreme; but if you will give me another of those excellent cakes, which have done me so much good, perhaps the inspiration of it will bear some scheme. I have made a promise, I have sworn to bring you to the rose of your desire."

Prince Nūrgihān gave the guardian of the forest another cake, which he dropped into the cavern of his throat, before wrapping his head in the hood of cogitation. Suddenly he lifted his eyes, and said: "The cake has done its work! Seat yourself on my arm and we will fly together to China; for I have found the simplest of all ways to distract the attention of those Jinn: I will throw them one of these astonishing sugar-and-butter cakes."

At these words, the boy, who had known great anxiety when the Jinnī of the forest swooned, grew calm again and blossomed like the young rose and freshened like the grass of the garden after rain. "It is permitted", he said to the Jinnī.

So the giant took the prince on his left arm and flew through the

air towards China, shielding his burden from the near rays of the sun with his right hand, devouring distance in his flight. Soon he came to the capital city of China and set Nūrgihān down at the entrance of that marvellous garden where dwelt the sea rose. "You can enter with a calm heart", he said, "for I go to distract the guards with that cake. You will find me waiting for you here, when you have finished your business."

The prince entered the garden and found it a morsel of high Paradise, as lovely as a vermilion evening.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

IN the middle of this garden was a lake filled to the brim with rose-water, and in these scented waves a fire-red flower bloomed from a single stem. This was the admirable sea rose; none but the nightingale could find description for it.

Drunken with the beauty and smell of it, Prince Nūrgihān threw aside his clothes and, plunging into the scented water, pulled up the rose tree by its roots. Then he swam back with his delicate burden, dried and dressed in the shade of the trees, and hid his prize in his mantle, while the birds among the reeds gave the stream tidings of the rape.

But he would not leave the garden until he had visited a delightful pavilion, built of Yemen carnelians, which stood beside the water. Entering, he found himself in a high hall, containing an ivory bed studded with jewels and shaded by artfully-embroidered curtains. He opened these curtains with his hand and stood spell-bound at the sight of a tender girl, who lay couched upon cushions with no vest or ornament save beauty. She slept deeply, little knowing that a human gaze had pierced the veil of her mystery.

Her hair was in disorder, and her white hand with its five dimples was thrown up carelessly to touch her brow. The negro of night had fled into her musk-tinted hair; the sisters, the Pleiades, had veiled themselves in cloud before the bright chaplet of her teeth.

This was none other than Lily-Brow, the girl of China, and the sight of her nakedness cast Nūrgihān to the floor in a swoon. When, at length, he came to himself with a cold sigh, he whispered in the sleeping ear of the princess:

*They would sell silks to me,  
But I came by your bed  
And with my fingers tested the dark subtlety  
Of your hair instead.  
You are dressed in the narcissus and the rose  
And those  
Appear to me  
As cool as the palm-tree.  
You sleep on purple tissue;  
Surely to me  
Your face is the fair issue  
Of dawn from thence  
And your light eyes the excellence  
Of stars above the sea.*

Then, as he wished to leave the sleeper some token of his entrance to that place, he changed rings with her. As he left the pavilion, he said over to himself:

*I leave this garden with a blood-red tulip  
Deep in my heart for wound and ornament.  
Unhappy he, who from a greater garden  
Were called with no flower in his tunic fold,  
Nor time to gather one before he went.*

He found the guardian of the forest waiting for him at the gate, and begged him to fly straight to the kingdom of Zain al-Mulūk in Sharkastān. "To hear is to obey!" answered the Jinnī. "But not until you have given me another cake." So Nūrgihān gave him the last cake, and was instantly borne aloft and carried towards Sharkastān.

They came, without difficulty, to the palace of the blind king, and there the Jinnī said to his young friend: "O capital of my life and joy, I will not leave you without one mark of my solicitude. Take this tuft of my beard hairs, and, when you have need of me, burn one of them." So saying, he kissed the hands which had fed him, and went upon his way.

Nūrgihān sought audience of his father and, when he was introduced into the royal presence, drew the miraculous sea rose from under his mantle and handed it to the blind King. No sooner had the sufferer brought his eyes close to the blossom, whose odour and beauty drifted the soul of all who stood there, than his eyes became as bright as stars and beheld the colours of the world again.

In joyful thanks the King kissed his son upon the brow and pressed him to his heart in tenderness. He made proclamation throughout his kingdom that henceforth he but shared the empire with Nūrgihān, and gave order that royal rejoicings should be held for a whole year, to open the door of pleasure to all his subjects, rich and poor, and shut the door of heaviness against them.

Now that there was no danger of his father becoming blind again, Nūrgihān was re-established in the King's favour and had no thought but to plant the sea rose so that it should not die. To this end he burnt one of the Jinnī's beard hairs and, when the guardian of the forest appeared, begged him to see to the matter. So the giant hollowed out a fountain basin between two rocky peaks of the garden, in a single night. Its cement was of pure gold, and the foundations of it were jewels. The prince planted

the sea rose in the midst of it, and she became again an enchantment to the nose and eyes.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

**B**UT, in spite of their father's cure, the two eldest sons, who had returned from China with drooping noses, pretended that the sea rose had no miraculous virtue, and that the King had only recovered his sight through sorcery and the intervention of the Stoned One.

Zain al-Mulūk was equally angry at their insinuation and their lack of discernment. He brought them together in the presence of their brother Nūrgihān, and talked to them severely, saying: "How can you doubt the effects of the sea rose on my sight? Do you not believe that Allāh, Who brings forth woman out of man and man from woman, may as easily set healing in the heart of a rose? Listen, and I will tell you the apt adventure of an Indian princess.

"There was once, in the antiquity of time, a King of India who held in his harīm a hundred women, chosen from the myriad beauties of that land. But none of these conceived or bore a child; and this was a grief to the King, for he was old and bent. At length, however, Allāh permitted the youngest of his wives to become pregnant and bear a daughter of exceptional loveliness.

"Fearing that her lord would be vexed that her offspring was not a son, the mother put about the statement that she had borne a boy, and concerted with the astrologers to make the King believe that he must not look upon his heir until he was ten years old.

"When the girl approached that age, her mother taught her carefully how she might pass as a boy; and the quick child learned her lesson so well that she came and went in the royal apartments,

dressed in a prince's garments, and a very prince in all her behaviour.

"The King rejoiced more and more each day at the beauty of his heir and, when five more years had passed, determined and made preparation to marry him to the daughter of a neighbouring Sultān.

"At the time appointed, he had his son dressed in a magnificent robe, and set out with him, in a gold palanquin upon an elephant's back, to the country of the bride. And in such embarrassing circumstance the counterfeit prince wept and laughed by turns.

"One night, when the royal procession had halted in a leafy forest, the princess left the palanquin and went apart among the trees to satisfy a need which is imperative even upon princesses. Suddenly she found herself face to face with a young and handsome Jinnī who sat on the ground below the branches, and was the guardian of that forest. Dazzled by her beauty, the creature gave her gentle greeting, and asked who she was and what might be her business in that place. Wooed to confidence by his engaging air, she told her story in all its details and gave expression to those fears which she had for the bridal night.

"The Jinnī was moved by her embarrassment and, after a moment's reflection, generously offered to lend her his sex in its entirety and to take hers, on condition that she would hold the former in strict trust and return it when it had served her purpose. The princess gratefully accepted this proposition, and, by Allāh's grace, the exchange was effected without difficulty or complication. Light with delight and heavy with her new merchandise, the girl returned to her father and climbed up again into the palanquin; but, as she was not yet used to her novel ornaments, she sat down clumsily upon them and rose with a cry of pain. Yet she controlled herself so quickly that the accident was not noticed; and she took great care to run no such risk in future, to avoid both suffering and any harm she might do to a thing which she was engaged to return in working order to its owner.

“A few days after this, the train arrived at the bride’s city, the marriage was celebrated with great pomp, and the groom made such good use of his borrowed instrument that the bride became pregnant on that night, and all concerned rejoiced.

“At the end of nine months the girl gave birth to a delightful boy, and, when she had risen from her bed, her husband said to her: ‘It is time that you came with me to my father’s court to see my mother and my kingdom.’ This he said only as an excuse to set out; for his real intention was to return the Jinnī’s sex, which, during these nine agreeable months, had developed and improved in beauty.

“The young wife consented to her lord’s proposal, and the two set forth. When they reached the forest where the Jinnī dwelt, the prince left the caravan and betook himself to the spot where the exchange had been made. There he found the Jinnī, sitting in the same place, visibly fatigued and with a monstrous belly. After greeting, he said: ‘O chief and crown of the Jinn, thanks to your benevolence I have done my duty well; now I come to return your property, greater and improved in beauty, and to receive my own.’ He would have handed over the thing, but the Jinnī answered: ‘Your faith is a great faith and your honour is commendable, but I regret to have to tell you that I am no longer anxious to reverse the exchange which we made. Destiny has ruled that the matter should end with the first barter. After we parted something happened which forbids any resumption of our former states.’ ‘And what was that, great Jinnī?’ asked the prince. ‘O one-time maiden’, answered the Ifrit, ‘I waited here for you, sedulously guarding the thing which you had left in my care and sparing no pains to keep it in its original state of white virginity. But one day a fellow Ifrit, the intendant of these regions, passed through the forest and came to see me. He knew by my changed smell that I was carrying a sex hitherto foreign, and fell violently in love with me. When he had excited a like sentiment in my heart, he joined

himself to me in the usual manner and broke the precious seal of the packet which I had in care. I felt all that a woman would feel in like circumstances, and determined that a female's pleasure is more durable and more delicate than a male's. I am now pregnant by my future husband and could not possibly give back your sex without running the risk of great pain and tearing in my labour. Therefore I can only beg you to keep my loan and to give thanks to Allāh that no harm at all has come from our exchange.' "

When he had told this story to his two eldest sons in the presence of their brother Nūrgihān, the King continued: "Thus it is proved that nothing is impossible to the might of the Creator. He Who can change a girl into a boy, and a Jinnī into a pregnant women, could, without difficulty, set a cure for blindness in the heart of a rose." He dismissed his two other sons and kept Nūrgihān by him to receive all the love and prerogative of his reign. So much for Zain al-Mulūk and his sons.

Now we must return to Princess Lily-Brow, the girl of China, the bereft mistress of the sea rose.

When the Perfumer of the sky had set the sun's gold plate, filled with the camphor of the dawn, within the eastern window, Princess Lily-Brow opened the magic of her eyes and stepped from the bed. She plied her comb, tressed her hair, and walked, with the pleasant balance of a swan, to the sheet of water which nourished her sea rose. For her first thought each morning was of that flower. She walked through the garden. Its air blew as from some aromatic shop, and the fruits of its branches were flasks of dyed sugar hung in the wind. The morning was fairer than all mornings and the alchemic sky had the colour of glass and turquoise. Flowers sprang up where the rose feet of the girl had trodden, and the dust which the fringes of her robe sent flying was a balm for the eyes of the nightingale.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.



*But when the night had come, she said:*

So she came to the rose-water lake and saw that her dear flower had gone. She was ready to melt like gold in the crucible, to fade like a flower in the hot wind; for, at the same moment that she perceived the flame flower's place empty, she noticed that the ring she wore was strange.

Remembering the nakedness of her sleep and realising that treacherous eyes had violated the delightful mystery of her form, she was tossed by the waves of confusion and wept in her pavilion all that day. But, after this, reflection brought her reasonable thoughts, and she said to herself: "How false is the proverb which says: *There is no track where no track has been left, for, were there track, it had been left!* And a greater lie is the saying: *One must lose oneself to find a lost thing.* For, as Allāh lives, though I am weak and young, I will set out in quest of the thief of my sea rose and punish the man who has slaked the desire of his eyes on the maidenhead of a sleeping princess."

She left her father's kingdom on the wings of impatience, followed by a train of girl slaves dressed as warriors; and, by dint of questioning, came at last to Sharkastān, and to the kingdom of Zain al-Mulūk, father of Nūrgihān.

She found the capital gay for the year-long festival of rejoicing, and heard the playing of music from each door. Still in her man's disguise, she asked the reason of this excitement, and people answered: "The King was blind, but his excellent son Nūrgihān succeeded, after incredible adventures, in curing him with the sea rose of the girl of China. It is to celebrate the return of his sight that we are commanded to rejoice for a whole year at the royal expense and to play music at our doors from morning to night."

Lily-Brow rejoiced to hear these certain tidings of her rose, and went down to bathe in the river after the fatigues of her journey. Then she dressed again as a youth and walked delightfully through

the markets towards the palace. Those who saw her were effaced with admiration more quickly than the marks of her little feet upon the sand, and the coiled ringlets of her hair twisted about the hearts of the merchants.

Thus she came to the royal garden and saw the sea rose blossoming, as of old, in the scented water of its gold pond. After a rapturous recognition of it, she murmured: "I will hide under the trees to catch a sight of the pert fellow who stole my rose and ring."

Soon the prince came down to the rose's pond. His eyes, those cups of drunkenness, troubled the wise with the sweet fires of their regards, his lashes shone like curved dagger blades, the curls of his musk black hair confused the heart like nard, his cheeks mocked the cheeks of young girls, his smiles were arrows, he walked nobly and daintily; the sun had dexterously painted a freckle on the left commissure of his lips; his breast was smooth and white like a crystal tablet, and hid a lively heart. Lily-Brow fell into a kind of amazement when she saw him, and almost lost her wits; for the poet had done this boy no more than justice, when he wrote:

*If in a throng of base and true men mixed  
He sped his shafts, that are in madness bathed,  
All noble hearts thereby would be transfixed  
And all unworthy hearts would go unscathed.*

When Lily-Brow came to herself, she rubbed her eyes and looked for the youth, but he was no longer there. "Oh, oh", she murmured to herself, "the man who stole my rose has taken my heart also! He who broke the rare flask of my honour upon the stone of his eyes' seduction has sent an arrow to my heart as well. Alas, from whom shall I seek justice for these assaults? I have no mother to do me right in this strange land."

Her heart was burning with passion as she went back to her maidens; she sat down among them and, taking paper and reed,

wrote a letter to Nūrgihān. This she sent with the changeling ring by the hand of her favourite, who found the prince sitting and dreaming, it must have been, of Lily-Brow. He was thrown into a trouble of the heart when he recognised his ring, and this became more intense when he opened the paper, and read:

“After homage to the free Master of How and Why, who has given beauty to maidens and the dark eye of seduction to young men, lighting a lamp in the heart of both so that the moth of wisdom shall be destroyed.

“I die of my love for your eyes of languor; the flame devours me. How false is the proverb which says: *A heart will have a heart*; for I am consumed, and you know nothing of it. What defence will you make if I accuse you of assassination?

“But write no further, O pen; for you have said too much.”

An answering fire took hold of Nūrgihān as he read these words. As restless as quicksilver, he took paper and answered thus:

“To her who queens it over all the silver-bodied fair, the curve of whose brows is as a sword in the hands of a drunken soldier!

“Star-fronted lady of light, jealousy of China, your letter has torn open the wound in my lonely heart. My lonely heart beats for you as many times as there are freckles on the full of the moon.

“A spark from your heart has fallen upon my wound, and the blaze of my desire has caught your harvest. Only a lover knows the joy of wasting away. I am like a half-killed fowl which rolls on the ground day and night, and will die if it be not lifted.

“O Lily-Brow, there is no veil upon your face, but you are yourself your veil! Come forth from behind it, for the heart is an admirable matter, and, though it be very small, Allāh has made His house there!

“O charm, I must not speak more clearly or confide more secrets to my pen, for he is of too masculine a shape to be allowed into the harīm of a lover’s heart.”

Nūrgihān folded this letter, sealed it with his favourite seal,

and, as he gave it to the messenger, begged her to say all the delicacies of passion to her mistress as a supplement to what he had written.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

THE girl found her mistress waiting with eyes like the hearts of jonquils bathed in tears; so she greeted her with a smile, saying: "O rose upon the tree of joy, may the reason for these tears staining the petals of your face recoil on me and leave you ever laughing! I bring good news!" And she gave Nūrgihān's letter, together with all the delicacies of passion as a supplement to what he had written.

As soon as Lily-Brow had read and had her joy confirmed by the slave's words, she rose and bade her girls prepare her.

The pretty women used all their art; they combed and scented her hair until the musk of Tartary had fumed off in mist for jealousy, and hearts danced to see her braids falling below her hips, tressed like palm trees on a day of festival. They put a belt of red lawn about her waist, and each of its threads was a hunting noose. They draped her in rose-tinted gauze which confessed her body, and put drawers upon her of royal amplitude and a more cloudy texture, sewn to enslave the world. They braided the long division of her hair with pearls until the stars of the milky way were cast into confusion. They put a diadem upon her brow, and then were thrown into a trance by the picture they had made. Yet her beauty was more than all their art.

Thus dressed, Lily-Brow went again with beating heart to the garden trees about the rose's pond. When Nūrgihān saw her below the branches, he swooned away, but the scent of her sighs brought his lids fluttering open again, and he lay upon the zenith

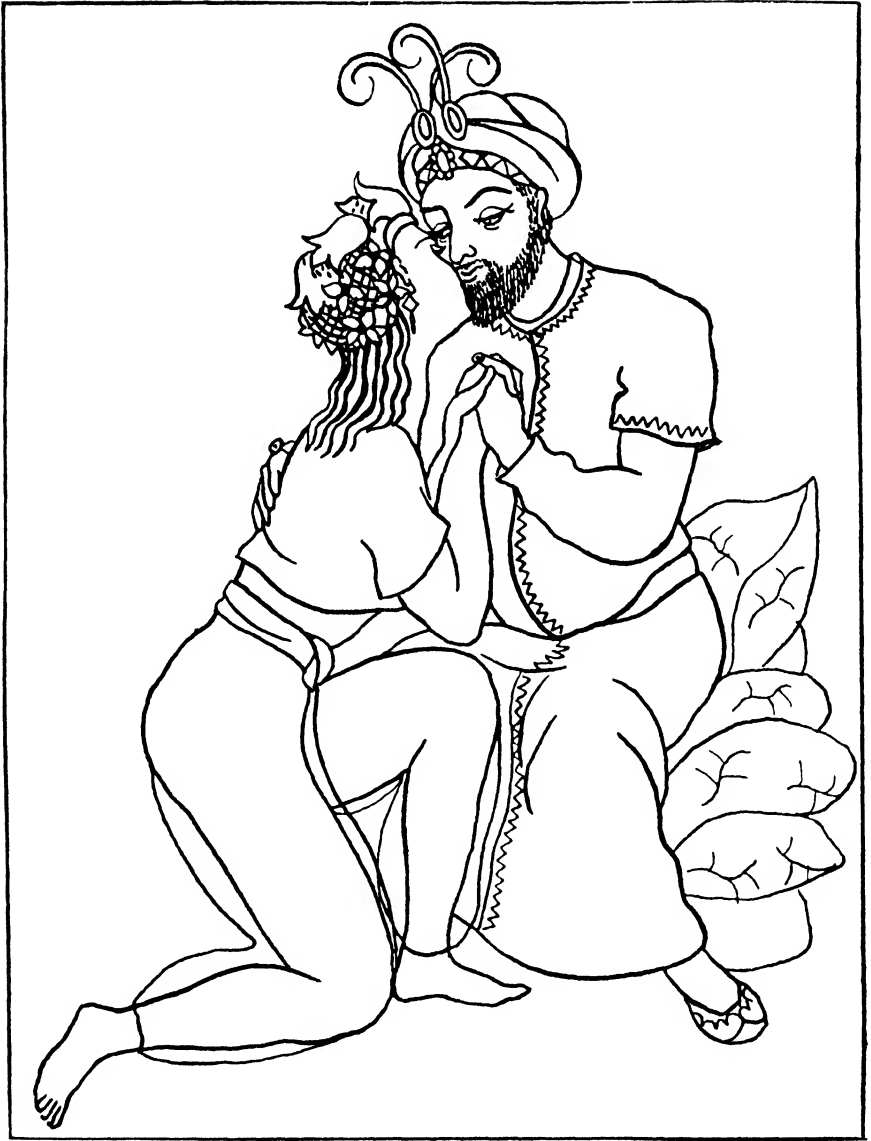
of delight as he looked up at her. Lily-Brow found the prince so exact a counterfeit of the picture graven upon the leaves of her heart that she set aside the veil of reserve and gave him all her gifts: lips more to be desired than rose petals, silver arms, the moonlight of her smile, her cheeks' gold, the musk of her breathing, passing the musk of Tartary; the almonds of her eyes, her curls' black amber, the apple of her chin, the diamonds of her glances, and the thirty-six carven poses of her maiden body. Love bound his threads about their breasts and brows, and none may know what happened under the trees that night between so fair a two.

As neither love nor musk can be ignored for ever, parents on both sides learned of the affair and hastened to wed them.

They passed the remainder of their lives between loving and looking at the sea rose.

Glory be to Allāh Who sends both love and roses! And prayer and peace be upon our master and lord Muhammad, the Prince of Messengers, and upon all his line!





## THE TENDER TALE OF PRINCE JASMINE AND PRINCESS ALMOND

*But when the night had come, Shabrazād said:*

It is related—but Allāh in the Highest knows all!—that there was once, in a certain Mussulmān country, an old king whose heart was as the ocean, who had the wisdom of Aflātūn, whose nature was the nature of the Sages, whose glory surpassed the glory of Faridūn, whose star was the star of Alexander, whose fortune was the fortune of the Persian Ānūshīrwān. This King had seven sons, seven fires of the Pleiades. But the youngest was in everything the most excellent. He was white and rose, and his name was Prince Jasmine.

The lily faded when he was by, for he stood like a cypress and his cheeks were new tulips. The musk curls of his violet-tendrilled hair borrowed their darkness from a thousand nights, his colouring was blond amber, his lashes were curved arrows, his eyes were the long eyes of the jonquils, two pistachios formed the seduction of his lips. His brow shamed the moonlight, blotting the face of the full moon with blue; his mouth, whose teeth were diamonds and whose tongue was a rose, distilled a language sweeter than the sugarcane. Bold and active and beautiful, he was made to be the god of lovers.

Prince Jasmine had been chosen from among his brothers to guard the vast buffalo herds of his father, King Nujūm-Shāh. As he sat one day in the lonely pasturage, watching his charges and playing upon the flute, a venerable darwish approached him and, after greeting, begged him to draw off a little milk. "O holy man", answered the prince, "it grieves me bitterly that I cannot satisfy your need. I have milked all my buffaloes this morning, and there is nothing left with which to quench your thirst." "Nevertheless, call upon Allāh's name", said the darwish, "and milk one of the animals a second time. I think that benediction will follow." At once the jonquil prince did as the old man suggested. He invoked



the name of Allāh and worked the udder of the fairest cow. Benediction followed, and the pail filled with foaming blue milk. Jasmine set the pail before his chance guest, and the darwish drank until he was satisfied. Then he smiled and turned to the prince, saying: "Delicate child, you have not wasted your milk; by giving it you have advanced your fortune. I came to you as a messenger of love and now I see that you deserve love's gift, which is the first gift and the last. A poet has said:

*Love was before the light began,  
When light is over, love shall be;  
O warm hand in the grave, O bridge of truth,  
O ivy's tooth  
Eating the green heart of the tree  
Of man!*

"Yes, my son, I approach your heart as a messenger of love, and yet no one sent me. If I have crossed plains and deserts it was but to find a youth worthy to come near a girl, a fairy girl I chanced to see one morning as I passed her garden. You must know, O lighter than the breeze, that in the kingdom which marches with your father's, a girl of royal blood has seen you in her dreams. Her face is the moon's shame, she is one pearl lying in the casket of excellence, a spring of fair weather, a niche of beauty. Her slight body has the colour of silver, and stands like a box-tree; her waist is a hair's breadth, her station is the station of the sun, she has the walk of a partridge. Her hair is of hyacinth, her eyes are sabres of Isfahān; her cheeks resemble the verse of Beauty in the Book; the bows of her brows recall the chapter of the Pen. Her mouth, carved from a ruby, is an astonishment; a dimpled apple is her chin, its beauty spot avails against the evil-eye. Her very small ears wear lovers' hearts instead of jewels, the ring of her nose is a slave ring about the moon. The soles of her little feet are altogether

charming. Her heart is a sealed flask of perfume, her soul is wise. Her approach is the tumult of the Resurrection! She is the daughter of King Akbar, and her name is Princess Almond. Such names are blessed!"

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

AFTER drawing a long breath the darwish said again: "But I should tell you, O river of sympathy, that it is within a liver burnt by sorrow that the child lodges her love; a mountain lies upon her heart because of a dream. She was as desolate as the sumbul when I left her. . . . And now that my words have cast the seed of love into your heart, may Allāh preserve you and lead you towards your Destiny!"

The darwish rose and departed, leaving Prince Jasmine's heart transfixed and bleeding. As did Majnūn in his love for Lailah, he tore his robes from neck to waist, and sighed and cried, strangling in the curls of Princess Almond. He wandered away from his herd, drunk without wine, shaken and dazed by the whirlwind of his passion. The shield of wisdom is proof against many wounds, but not against the bow of love. The medicine of good counsel is unavailing to a soul stricken by that pure sentiment. So much for Prince Jasmine.

One night, as Princess Almond slept upon the terrace of her father's palace, she saw a dream sent by the Jinn of love, and in it a youth fairer than Zulaikah's lover, a counterpart, line for line and beauty for beauty, of Prince Jasmine. As this vision became ever more clear to the eyes of her maiden soul, her careless heart slipped from her fingers and became enmeshed in the twined curls of the boy. She woke with her pulse beating to the rose of dreams, and, as she cried into the darkness like a nightingale, tears came

to bathe the hot silver of her cheeks. Her maidens ran to her, crying: "In Allāh's name, what are these tears upon the face of Almond? What has passed in her heart as it slept? Alas, alas, the bird of her reason has flown away!"

Their lamentation lasted till morning, and at dawn the King and Queen were told of the princess's grief. They ran in their anxiety to her chamber, where she sat with disordered hair and robes, with no news of her body and no attention for her heart. She answered all their questions with silence and a modest shaking of the head, so that they sorrowed exceedingly.

They brought doctors and conjurors to her, but these made her worse, for they thought it necessary to bleed her. They bound her arm and pricked it with their lancet, but not one drop of blood came from that charming vein. They ceased from their operation and went their way, shaking their heads and saying that there was no hope.

Some days passed without any coming forward to understand this malady. Then her maidens led the fevered Almond to the garden, hoping that this might be a distraction for her. But, wherever her eyes glanced, they recognised her love: the roses told her of his body, the jasmine spoke of the perfume of his garments, the cypress called to mind his balance, and the narcissus looked upon her with his eyes. She seemed to see his lashes in thorns, and pressed them to her heart.

When the greenness of the garden had a little recovered her parched heart, and the stream of which they made her drink had cooled her mind, her girls sat in a circle about her and sang a light ghazal for her delight.

Then, seeing that she was more ready to take heed, her dearest servant moved near to her, saying: "O our mistress, a few days ago a young flute-player came to our fields from the land of the noble Hazārah; the melody of his voice would bring back reason, would check the flowing of water and the flight of swallows. He is

## TENDER TALE OF PRINCE JASMINE AND PRINCESS ALMOND

white and rose, and his name is Jasmine. The lily fades when he is by, for he stands like a cypress and his cheeks are new tulips. The musk curls of his violet-tendrilled hair borrow their darkness from a thousand nights. His colouring is blond amber, his lashes are curved arrows, his eyes are the long eyes of the jonquils, two pistachios form the seduction of his lips. His brow shames the moonlight, blotting the face of the full moon with blue; his mouth, whose teeth are diamonds and whose tongue is a rose, distils a language sweeter than sugarcane. Bold and active and beautiful, he is made to be the god of lovers. . . . This princely flute-player has come, lighter and more agile than the morning breeze, over difficult mountains to our land. He has crossed the running of great rivers, where the swan herself would have no confidence, where the waterfowl and wild drakes would turn giddy and undergo a thousand astonishments. Would he have faced these ardours had it not been for love?"

The girl fell silent, and Akbar's ailing daughter rose up, happy and dancing, upon her two feet. Her cheeks were lighted by a red fire within, her drunken soul looked from her eyes. No trace of her malady remained, the simple words of a girl speaking of love had scattered it like smoke.

She entered her own apartment, as light and swift as a gazelle. She wrote with the pen of joy upon the paper of meeting. She wrote to Prince Jasmine, who had stolen her reason, who had glowed before the eyes of her spirit. She wrote this white-winged letter:

*"After praise to Him Who, without ink or pen, has written the life of His creatures within the garden of beauty.*

*"Greeting to the rose who has made drunk the nightingale!*

*"When I heard tell of your beauty, my heart slipped from my hand.*

*"When I saw your face in dreams, I forgot my father and my mother, and became a stranger in my own house. What are father or mother, when a maiden is made stranger even to herself?"*

ARABIAN LOVE TALES

*“In your presence the fair are swept down as by a torrent; the arrows of your eyes have cleft my heart in twain.*

*“Oh, show me the beauty of yourself in my waking, that my living eyes may see. You, who are learned in the science of love, must know that the heart’s road leads to the heart.*

*“You are the water and clay of my being; the roses of my bed have turned to thorns; the seal of silence is upon my lips, and I have forgotten my careless walking.”*

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But when the night had come, she said:*

SHE folded the wings of this letter, slipping a grain of musk between them, and gave it to her favourite. The girl carried it over her heart and went, like a homing pigeon, to the wood where Jasmine played his flute. She found him seated below a cypress, singing this short ghazal:

*I see in my heart  
Clouds and lights dart,  
Part quicksilver, part  
Blood on the sea.  
When the night has gone  
We shall be joined anon  
Like the river and swan,  
I and she.*

He read the letter and well-nigh swooned for joy, knowing not if he slept or waked. His heart glowed like a furnace and waves troubled the surface of his soul; it was in a daze that he heard the plans and instructions of his mistress.

At the determined hour the angel of meeting led Jasmine along the path to Almond's garden. He scaled the walls into this fragment of Paradise, just as the sun was sinking in the western haze and the moon showed her face below the veils of the East. He walked, as lightly as a fawn, to a certain tree which the young confidant had described, and climbed up to hide himself in the branches.

Princess Almond came with night into the garden. She was dressed in blue and held a blue rose in her hand. She trembled like the leaves of a willow, as she lifted her head towards the tree; she could not determine whether she saw the full moon caught in the branches or whether Jasmine waited for her there. But soon, as a flower ripened by desire, a fruit heavy with its precious weight, the boy slipped from the branches, and covered the pale feet of the princess with his violet-tendrilled hair. She recognised her dream and found the truth of its image fairer. Jasmine saw that the darwish had not lied, and that this moon was the crown of moons. Their hearts were bound together tenderly, their happiness was as great as the happiness of Majnūn and Lailah, as pure as the friendship of old men.

After most sweet kisses and blossoming of the soul, they prayed to the Master of perfect love that the tyrant sky should never rain his bolts upon them, to ravish the seam of their enchantment. As a first resource against separation, they decided that Almond should immediately interview her father, the King, as he loved her and could refuse her nothing.

She left Jasmine beneath the trees and entered her father's presence as a suppliant, joining her hands, and saying: "O high noon of the two worlds, your servant wishes to ask a favour." The King was both astonished and delighted; he lifted her in his hands and pressed her to his bosom, as he answered: "Surely, O Almond of my heart, it must be an urgent favour which brings you from your bed in the midst of night to beg for it. But whatever it may be, light of my eye, trust in your father and speak fearlessly." The

gentle Almond hesitated for a little, and then, raising her face to the King's, spoke thus with subtlety: "My strength and health have returned to me after taking an evening walk in the meadow with my girls. I have interrupted you thus unseasonably to tell you that I noticed how ill our cattle and sheep were kept. It came into my mind that, if I should meet a worthy herd or shepherd, I would bring him to your notice. Hardly had I had this thought, when, by a happy chance, I came upon a most diligent and active man. He is young and well-disposed; he fears neither trouble nor fatigue, laziness and carelessness are removed by many parasangs from his heart. O father, I beg you to put him in charge of our flocks and herds."

King Akbar listened to this discourse with astonished, bulging eyes. "By my life", he cried, "I have never heard of a shepherd being engaged in the middle of the night. But your recovery has so delighted me that I swear to employ the herd of your choice, if I think him suitable when I have seen him."

Princess Almond went on the wings of joy to find Jasmine under the trees. She took him by the hand and led him into her father's presence, saying: "Here is the excellent shepherd of whom I spoke; his heart is proved, his crook is strong." Now Allāh had graced King Akbar with intelligence, and he was puzzled to see that the youth whom his daughter brought to him was quite unlike the run of herd boys. As he was determining to keep silence concerning these important differences, rather than distress his child, the princess read his thought and, joining her hands together, said in a most moving voice: "Father, the outside is not always an index to the inside. I assure you that this young man is used to herding lions." So, to please her, King Akbar put the finger of consenting to his eye and, in the middle of the night, engaged Prince Jasmine to watch his flocks and herds.

At this point Shahrazād saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

And her sister, little Dunyazād, who had become in all things desirable, a girl each day and every night more ripe and charming, more silent, more understanding, and more attentive, half rose from her carpet, saying: "O Shahrazād, how sweet and delectable are your words, how pleasant to our taste!" Shahrazād smiled and embraced her, as she answered: "They are as nothing to those which I should use to-morrow night, if our master, this exquisitely mannered King, were not weary of my talking." "O Shahrazād", cried King Shahryār, "how can you hint at such a possibility? You have calmed my heart and taught my soul. There has been a blessing upon the land since you came to me. Rest assured that you may finish your delightful tale to-morrow; even to-night, if you are not too tired. I am eager to know what happened to Prince Jasmine and Princess Almond." But Shahrazād said no more that night.

The King pressed her to his heart and slept by her side until the morning. When he rose and went to sit in judgment, he saw his wazīr come, bearing a winding-sheet destined for Shahrazād; for the old man every day expected that he would hear of her death, because of the oath which Shahryār had sworn. The King said nothing to allay his fear, but entered the dīwān and sat there, giving judgment, raising some and debasing others, commanding and concluding cases, until the fall of day.

*But when the night had come,*

AND King Shahryār had done his usual with Shahrazād, little Dunyazād said to her sister: "Please, please tell us the rest of the tender tale of Prince Jasmine and Princess Almond, if you are not too weary." Shahrazād caressed the little one's hair, as she answered: "With all my heart and as in duty bound to this magnanimous King."



*And she continued:*

AFTER that time Prince Jasmine lived the outer life of a shepherd, but his interior being was occupied with love. By day he pastured his sheep and cattle at three or four parasangs from the palace; but, when evening came, he called them together with his flute, and led them back to the stables of the King. At night he stayed in the garden with his mistress Almond, that rose of excellence. Such was the tenor of his life.

But who may hold even the most hidden happiness to be safe for ever from the jealousy of censure?

In her love for him, Almond would send her herd boy food and drink into the woods. One day her passion led her to an imprudence, and she bore the dish herself, delicacies fit for his sugar lips, fruit, nuts and pistachios, pleasantly arranged upon the silver spaces. As she gave these things, she said: "May they be of easy digestion, eloquent little parrot, O comfit-eater!" With that she disappeared like camphor.

When this peeled almond had disappeared like camphor, Jasmine made ready to taste the delicacies; but he had hardly lifted the first of them to his mouth before he saw the princess's uncle coming towards him, a hostile and ill-intentioned old man, who spent his days in detestation of the world, preventing musicians from their instruments and singers from their singing.

The vile busybody suspiciously asked what the herd was doing with the King's dish; but Jasmine, who thought no evil and had a heart as generous as an Autumn rose, only supposed that his questioner wished to eat, and therefore gave him all the good things for himself.

The calamitous uncle carried the dish to King Akbar and, by its means, proved there to be some relation between Almond and Jasmine.

The King raged at this discovery, and called his daughter into his presence. "Shame of your fathers", he cried, "you have brought disgrace upon our house! Until to-day our dwelling was free from the thorns and bitter herbs of shame. But you have caught my neck in the running noose of your deceit, and have veiled the lamp of my intelligence with your cajolery. What man may boast that he is safe from women? The Prophet (on whom be prayer and peace!) has said: 'My Faithful, your wives and daughters are the chief of your foes. They lack both reason and probity. They were born of a twisted rib. It is your duty to reprimand them and, when they disobey, to beat them.' What shall I do to you, now that you have played the wanton with a stranger, a herd boy, whom it would be beneath your dignity to marry? Shall I cut off your heads with a single blow of my sword? Shall I burn the two of you in the fires of death?" Then, as she wept, he added: "Go from my presence now and bury yourself behind the curtain of the harim. Do not come out until I give you leave."

When he had thus punished his daughter, King Akbar gave orders for the destruction of her shepherd. There was a wood near that city, a lair of wild and terrifying beasts. Brave men shook and felt their hair stand upon end when the name of that wood was spoken before them. In its shade morning appeared as night, and night as the sinister dawn of Resurrection. Among the horrors of it were two pig-deer, which terrorised both bird and beast, and sometimes carried devastation into the city.

At their father's order, Almond's brothers sent Jasmine to perish in this terrifying place. Thinking no evil, he led the sheep and cattle of his charge into the wood, at that hour when the two-horned star shows upon the horizon and the Ethiopian of the night turns round his face to flee away. He left his flocks to feed at their will, and sat down upon a white skin, to draw the wine notes from his flute. Suddenly the two ravening pig-deer, who had been guided by his human smell, bounded into the clear space where he sat,

bellowing like thunder clouds. The sweet-eyed prince drew them with the sounds of his flute and tamed them with the glory of his playing. When he rose silently and left the forest, the two fierce beasts accompanied him, going upon his right and left, and the flocks and herds came after. At last beneath the very windows of the King, Jasmine enticed the pig-deer into an iron cage.

When Jasmine offered his captives to the King, Akbar felt himself to be in a difficulty, and revoked the sentence of death which he had passed.

But the princes, who would not so easily forgo their resentment, plotted together to marry their sister to a detested cousin, the son of that calamitous uncle. "We must bind the feet of this mad girl with the marriage rope", they said, "then perhaps she will forget her other and inordinate affection." For this purpose they assembled musicians and singers, fife-players and drummers, and made ready the procession.

Watched by her tyrannical brothers, the desolate Almond, who had been clothed against her will in splendid robes and the gold ornaments of marriage, sat on an elegant couch of gold brocade, a flower upon a bed of flowers, silent as a lily, motionless as an idol. She seemed as one dead among the living, her heart beat like a captive bird; her soul was mantled in grey dusk, and her breast torn by the nail of grief; her urgent spirit gloomily foreshadowed the muddy crow who should soon lie with her. She sat throned upon a very Caucasus of grief.

But Jasmine, who had come with the other servants to the bridal of his mistress, gave her hope to drink from a single glance of his eyes. Surely the looks of lovers can say twenty things.

When night came and the princess had been led to the marriage chamber, Destiny turned a fortunate face to the lovers and stayed their hearts with the eight odours. Taking advantage of the little moment before her bridegroom should come to her, Almond glided from the chamber in her gold robes and fled to Jasmine.

## TENDER TALE OF PRINCE JASMINE AND PRINCESS ALMOND

These two delightful children took hands and vanished, more lightly than the dew-wet breeze of morning.

Nothing has since been heard of them or their abiding place. There are few upon this earth worthy of happiness, worthy to take the road which leads to happiness, worthy to draw near the house of happiness.

Therefore glory and everlasting praise be to the Master of happiness! Amen.

“Such, O auspicious King”, said Shahrazād, “is the tender tale of Prince Jasmine and Princess Almond. I have told it as I heard it. But Allāh knows all!”



