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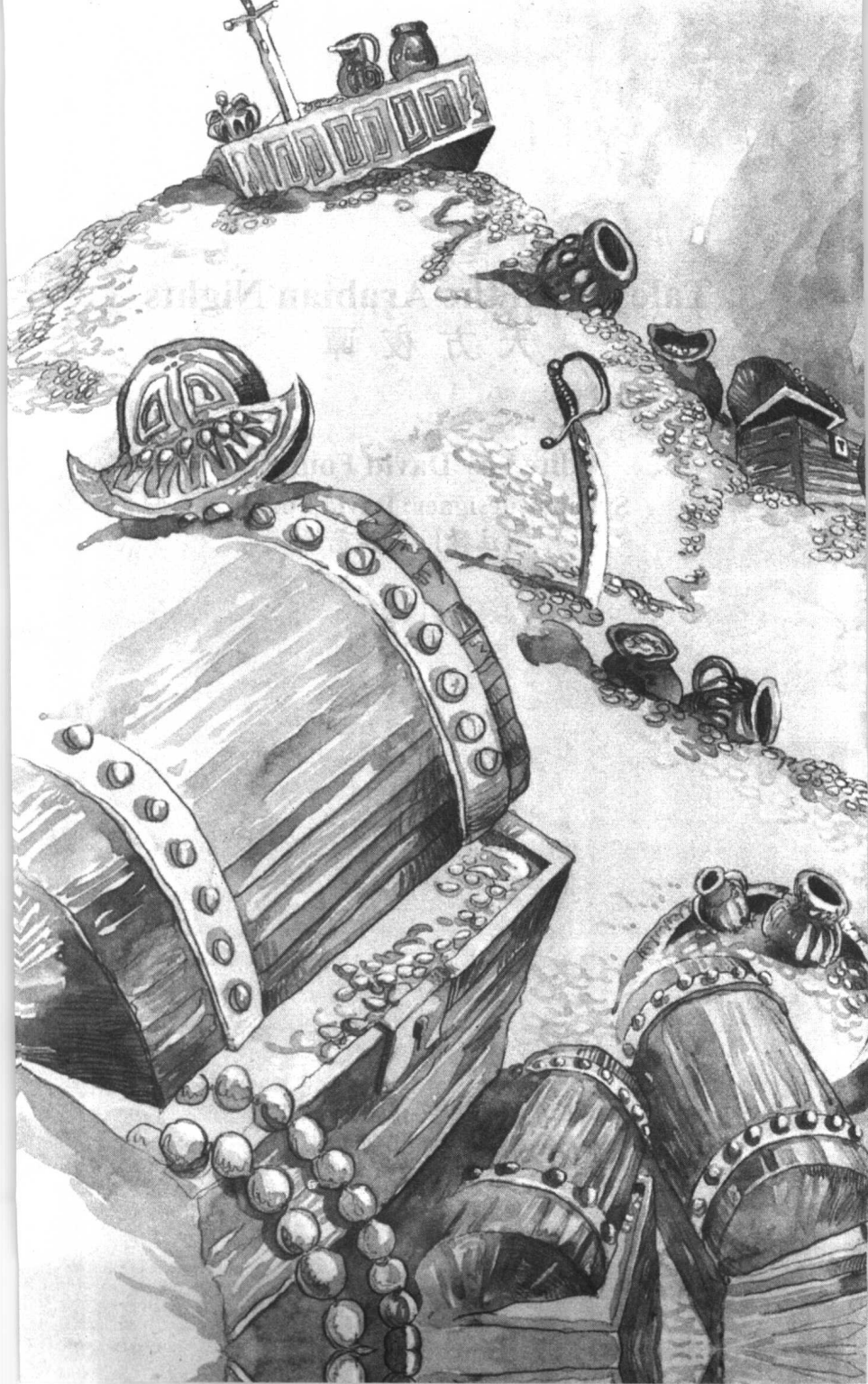
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Tales from the Arabian Nights

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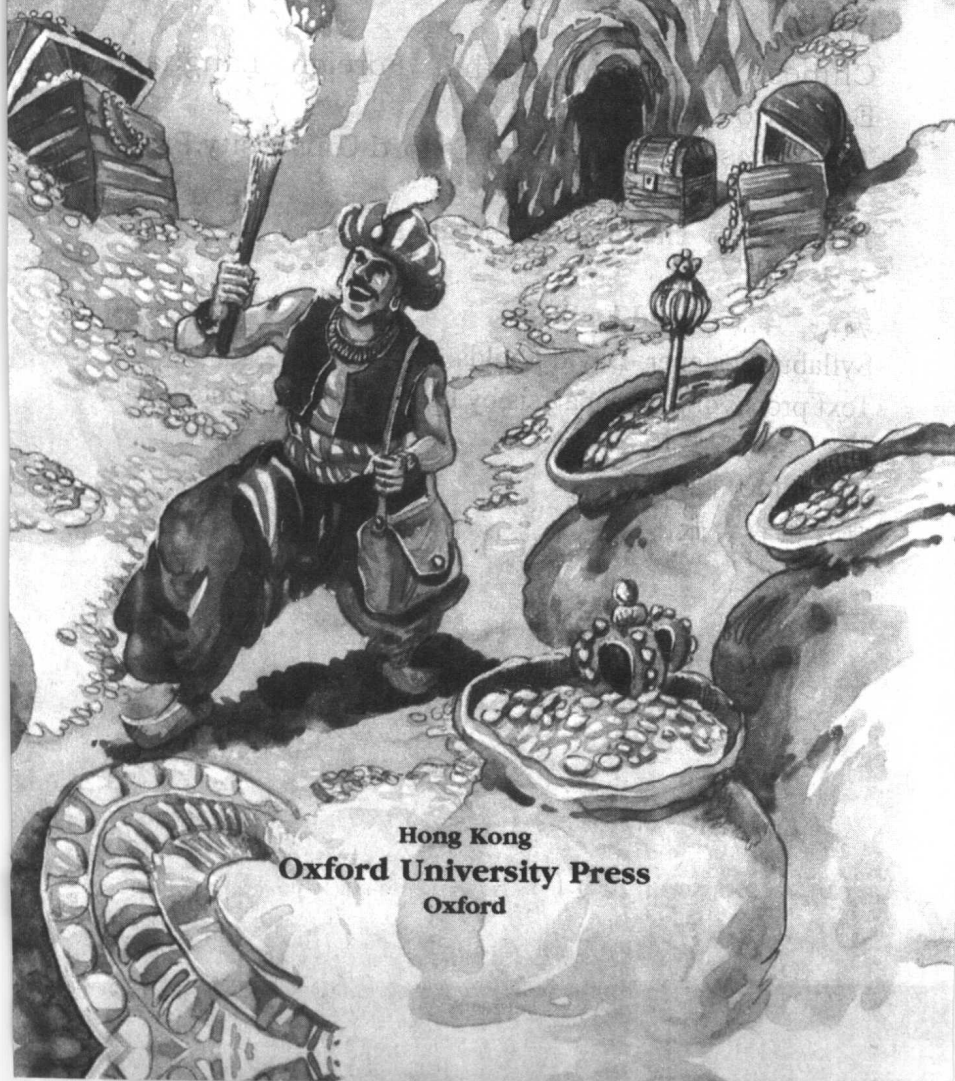
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Tales From The Arabian Nights

Edited by David Foulds



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Tales from the Arabian Nights

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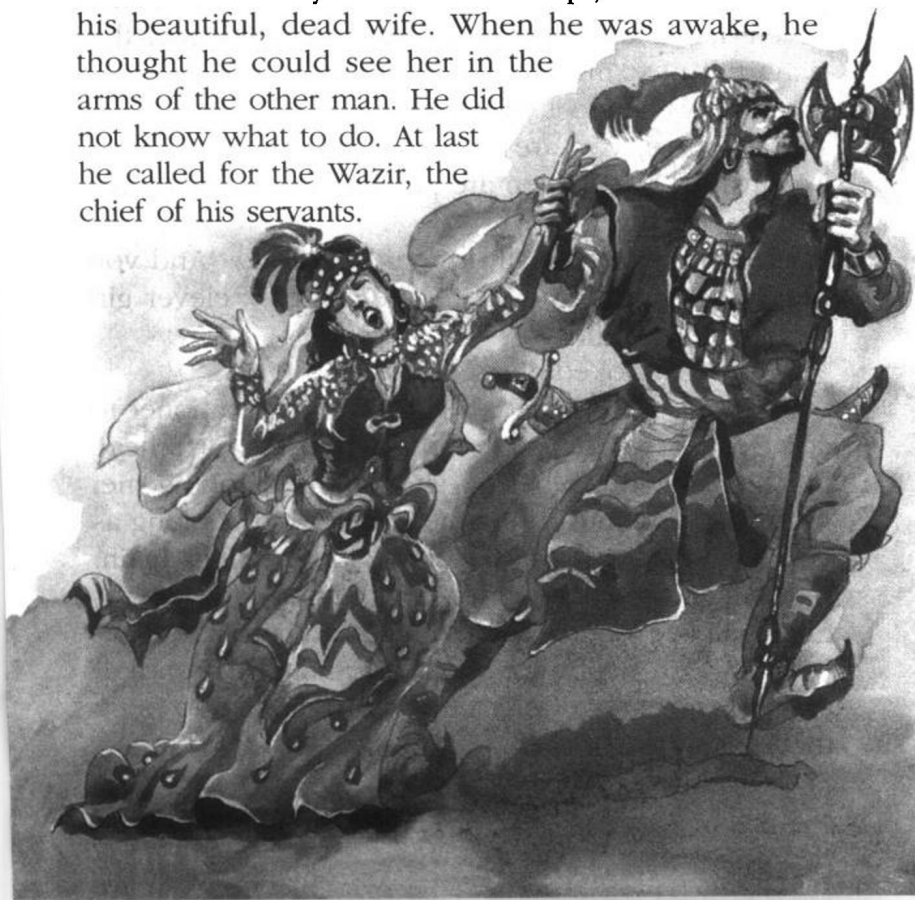


THE UNHAPPY KING

The King wants a wife

Long ago, there was a great king called Shahriah. He was a good king — until he found his wife loved another man. Then the King was very angry with his wife. 'Cut off her head!' he roared. The executioner 5 took the King's wife away, and cut her head off.

Every night after that the King lay in his great bed all alone and very sad. When he slept, he dreamed of his beautiful, dead wife. When he was awake, he thought he could see her in the arms of the other man. He did not know what to do. At last he called for the Wazir, the chief of his servants.



The sleepy Wazir hurried to the King's room.

'I will not spend another night by myself,' said the King.

'Oh, you have decided to marry again. I am so glad, dear King,' cried the Wazir, happily.

'Marry again? How can I do that? Women are so bad. A woman cannot love one man for more than one day.'

A new wife every day

10 'Any woman would love you for ever, great King,' said the Wazir.

'You are wrong!' roared King Shahriah. 'A woman's love is like a leaf in the wind. One minute it goes this way, the next minute it goes another way. No one
15 ever knows where it will go next.'

'Of course, you are right, O great King,' said the Wazir quickly. 'Women are just like leaves. But what can anyone do?'

'I know what I shall do,' said the King. 'And you
20 are going to help me. Bring me a pretty, clever girl and I will marry her.'

The Wazir looked pleased.

Then the King added, 'And tell the executioner to come to the wedding. He must cut off the girl's head
25 the next morning, before she can stop loving me. After that, you must bring me another girl. As long as you do your job, I shall never be alone at night again. As long as the executioner does his job, no wife of mine will live long enough to love another man!'

30 The Wazir went away sadly. He hated to send all those lovely girls to their deaths. But he had to obey the King.

The Wazir's daughter

For three years King Shahriah married a new wife every day. Every morning the executioner cut off the head of the King's new wife. More than a thousand girls died.

5

The Wazir was very unhappy about this, but he was afraid of the King. He was afraid of the executioner, too. He often shut himself in his room and cried. He prayed to God to help him.

One day, someone heard the Wazir crying. That person was the Wazir's daughter. She was beautiful, clever and good, and her name was Sheherezade. The Wazir loved her more than anything in the world.

10

Sheherezade walked into her father's room.

'Why are you so sad, Father?' she asked.

15

'Dear child,' said the Wazir, 'I am crying for a thousand lovely young girls. Every day the King marries a new wife. Every morning his executioner cuts off her head.'

'But why?' asked Sheherezade. Her father told her the whole sad story. 'It makes me so sad that it will break my heart,' he finished, 'but I don't know what I can do.'

20

Sheherezade's plan

25

Sheherezade was sad, too, when she heard about the poor young girls. She thought carefully for a few minutes. Then she said:

'Listen, Father. I think I know how we can stop the King from killing any more young girls. Let me marry him.'

30

'You? Oh, my dear daughter, do not throw your

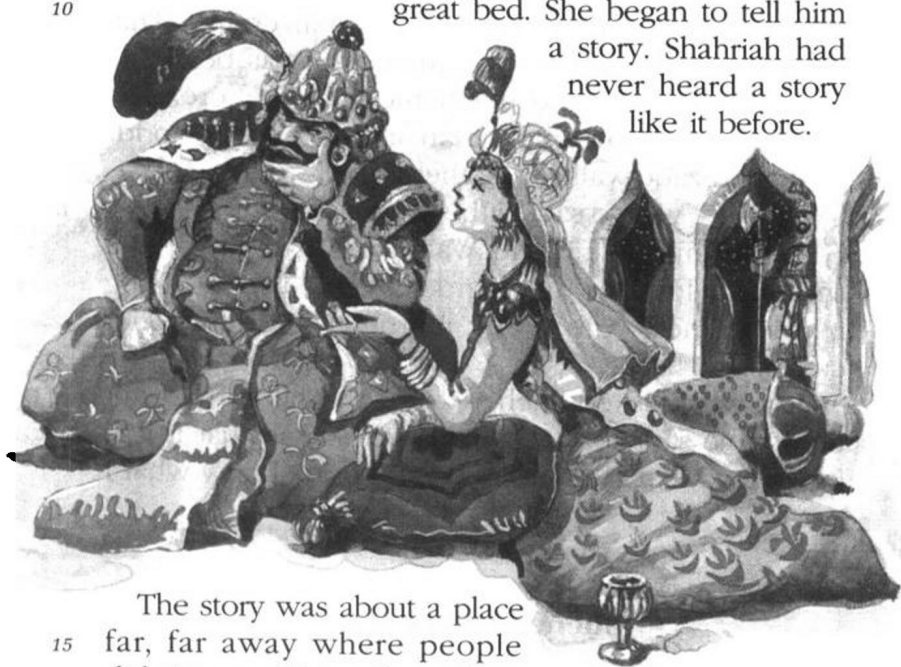
life away! Do not leave your poor old father alone in the world!"

'Father, please do as I ask you. I have a plan.'

King Shahriah was very happy when he saw
5 Sheherezade. 'Why didn't you bring this one to me before, Wazir?' he said.

'She is my own daughter, great King,' said the Wazir, very sadly.

10 That night Sheherezade lay beside the King in his great bed. She began to tell him a story. Shahriah had never heard a story like it before.



15 The story was about a place far, far away where people did strange things. Sometimes the story was funny, and the King laughed. He had not laughed so much for many years. Sometimes it was sad, and he could not stop crying. He had not
20 cried so much for many years, either. Always it was interesting. But before Sheherezade reached the end of the story, day had come.

The wonderful stories

The sun was up in a pink sky, and the birds were singing their morning song.

'It is day,' said the King. 'I have work to do. Tonight, Sheherezade, you must come to me again. You can finish the story then.'

5

The executioner was standing outside the door. 'Not this morning,' the king told him. 'Come again tomorrow.'

So Sheherezade lived one day longer than all the other young girls.

10

The next night she finished her story. Then she started a new one. This story, too, was about a wonderful place far, far away. The King laughed even louder at the funny parts. He cried even longer at the sad parts. He was so interested in the story that before he knew it, it was daytime. And of course, Sheherezade had not finished.

15

Once again the King sent the executioner away. He asked Sheherezade to come back the next night to finish her second story.

20

So it went on, night after night, week after week, month after month. Sheherezade knew so many different stories. Each one was new. Each one was too long to finish before day came.

Here are just a few of the stories that she told the King.

25

THE GENIE IN THE BOTTLE

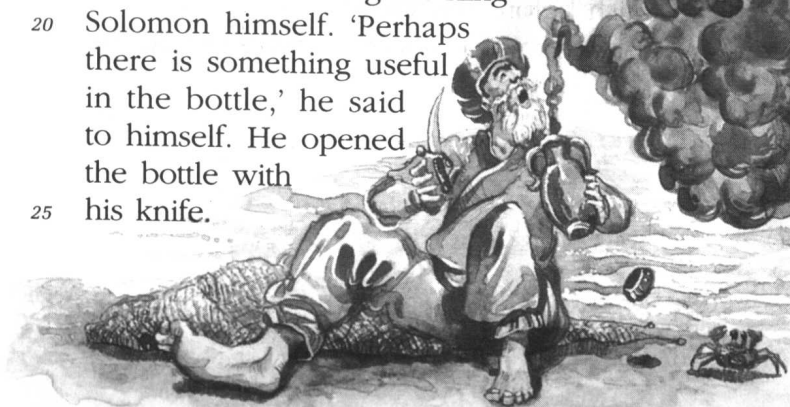
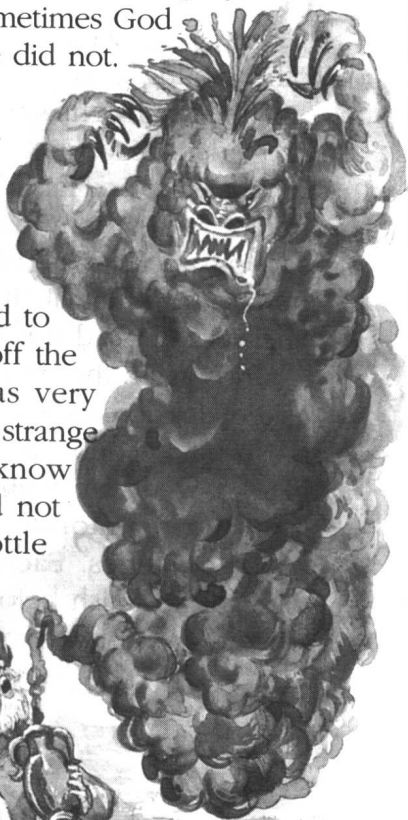
A bottle of dust

There was once a poor, old fisherman. Every day he went to the sea with his net. Every day he prayed to God to fill his net with fish. Sometimes God
5 answered his prayers; often He did not.

One morning the fisherman pulled his net out of the water. There was nothing in it except a dirty, old bottle.

10 The fisherman was sad. He wanted fish, not an old bottle.

'Perhaps I can sell it,' he said to himself. He washed the mud off the bottle and looked at it. It was very
15 old, and it was fastened with a strange seal. The fisherman did not know much about old things. He did not know that the seal on the bottle was the seal of the great King
20 Solomon himself. 'Perhaps there is something useful in the bottle,' he said to himself. He opened the bottle with
25 his knife.



He looked inside. The bottle was empty. Then the fisherman turned it over and shook it. Dust came out, at first just a little, then more and more. Faster and faster, dust flew out of the bottle and up into the air like a dark cloud. The cloud grew and grew. Soon the fisherman saw the shape of a huge man of dust. It was a magic man, a genie. 5

An angry genie

Some genies are small and friendly, but this one was as tall as a mountain and as fierce as a tiger. It did not look at all friendly. It looked angry, and bad. 10

The fisherman's mouth hung open. His eyes were as big as plates, and he was very frightened. He knelt on the sand and prayed to God to save him. When the genie spoke, the earth shook and the sky grew dark. 15

'Oh Solomon, great king. I am sorry, and I will never do it again — ' The genie stopped and looked at the frightened little fisherman. 'You are not Solomon!' 20

The fisherman shook his head. He said nothing. He was too frightened to speak.

'Who let me out of the bottle?' asked the genie.

'I did, sir,' said the fisherman.

'Get ready to die, little man,' roared the genie. 25

'But what have I done to you, Great One?'

'Choose the way you want to die, little man,' said the genie. 'Make it painful and nasty and very horrible. If it is not horrible enough I will think of a much more horrible way.' 30

'But what have I done?' repeated the poor fisherman. 'How have I made you so angry?'

'Listen, little man, I will tell you my story — but get ready to die afterwards. Don't think I will forget.'

The genie's tale

5 'I am a great genie,' said the genie, 'and I fought against King Solomon himself. My army was beaten and King Solomon made me his prisoner. I knelt down and begged him for my life. He could see how sorry I was.

10 "Stand up," King Solomon said to me. "Just obey me. Then I shall forgive you, and we can be friends."

"You forgive me?" I roared. "Me! I am the greatest, strongest genie in the whole world. You will have to wait a long time before I will do as you tell me! And you will wait much, much longer before I will
15 become your friend!"

'Then King Solomon said some magic words, and I suddenly felt myself getting smaller and smaller. He put me in this bottle. He closed it up with his own great seal. Then he told one of his soldiers to throw it
20 into the sea. That's my story,' said the genie.

'But King Solomon died two thousand years ago!' said the fisherman.

25 'Two thousand years!' cried the genie. 'So my old enemy is dead and I cannot kill him! Well, little man, you can take his place. I shall kill you, instead. Get ready to die.' He took a long, shining knife out of his belt, and he smiled a big, ugly smile.

The simple fisherman

30 The genie looked down at the fisherman. He thought the little man would be very frightened. But the

fisherman was looking at the genie with a smile on his tired, old face.

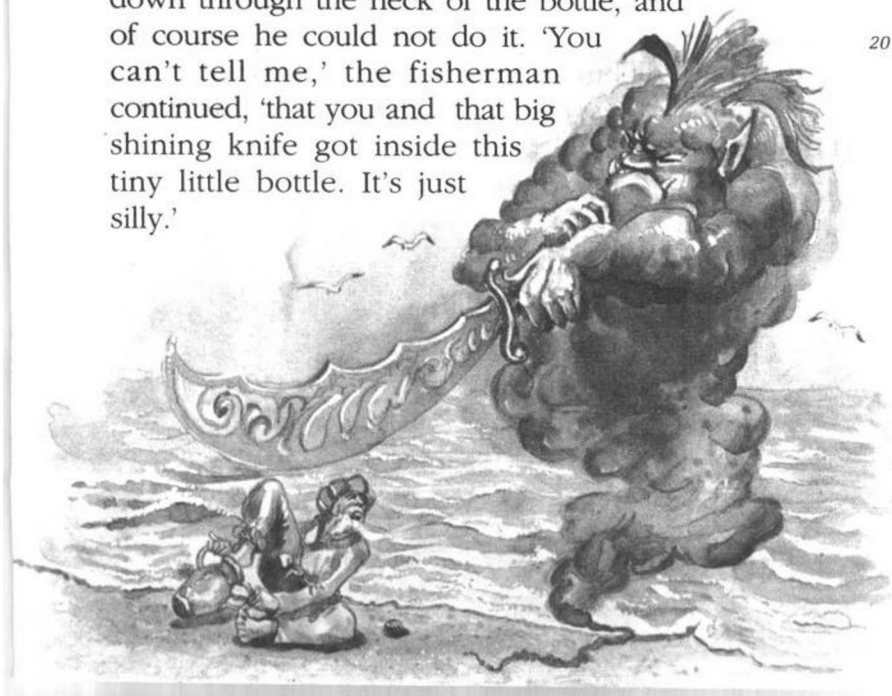
'Well, now,' said the fisherman, 'you don't think I am going to believe that, do you?'

'You don't believe me?' roared the genie. He was so angry that the sea and the sky shook. He lifted the big knife above his head. But the fisherman just smiled again.

'Now, tell me the truth — where did you come from? You didn't come out of that little bottle, did you? I know I am a simple man, but I am not stupid. How could a great genie get inside such a small bottle?'

'I am a genie,' said the genie. 'Genies can do anything!'

'Well I am not going to believe that,' said the fisherman. 'Look — I am a lot smaller than you, and I can't get into that bottle.' He tried to push his foot down through the neck of the bottle, and of course he could not do it. 'You can't tell me,' the fisherman continued, 'that you and that big shining knife got inside this tiny little bottle. It's just silly.'



The genie was so angry. 'Me?' he roared. 'Silly?' he roared. 'You are the silly one, little man. Can't you understand? A great genie like me can do anything. Watch!'

5

Back in the bottle

The body of the genie, tall as a mountain, broke up into a cloud of many different colours. The cloud grew smaller and smaller. At last, all that was left was some dust. The dust went through the neck of the
10 bottle.

'Oh!' smiled the old fisherman. 'So that's how you do it! Now I know you are a great genie.' Then he quickly took the seal and pushed it on top of the bottle. The bottle was fastened again — and the genie
15 was inside!

'And you can stay there for another two thousand years!' cried the fisherman. 'I shall tell the people in my village about you, too! Then, if they find your bottle, they will know they must not let you out.'

20 He thanked God for His help and he threw the bottle far away into the sea.

ALADDIN AND THE MAGIC LAMP

The strange uncle

There was once a tailor called Mustapha. Every day, he worked very hard. He worked from morning to night, but he was always very poor. His son, Aladdin, was a lazy boy and did nothing to help him. Then Mustapha died. After that Aladdin was much more lazy. His poor mother had to work to buy food for them.

One day, Aladdin was playing in the street when a stranger came up to him. 'Boy,' said the stranger, 'are you the son of Mustapha the tailor?' 10

'Yes,' answered Aladdin, 'but my father is dead.'

The stranger looked very sad. He threw his arms round Aladdin's neck. 'I am your uncle, dear boy,' he said. 'I have been away for many years. Now I am too late to see my poor, dear brother!' He took some money out of his pocket and gave it to Aladdin. 15

