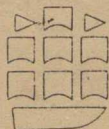


TALES FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

Simplified by Michael West

Illustrated by Victor Ambrus

850 word vocabulary



LONGMAN



The Sultan Schahriar

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Chapter One

THE SULTAN AND SCHEHERAZADE

The Sultan Schahriar loved his wife very much. He gave her everything that she could want. But, after a few years, he found that she was a very bad woman. He ordered the Vizir to put her to death.

Then the Sultan said, "All women are bad. I will now marry a new wife every day, and on the next morning she shall be put to death."

The people became very angry. In every family there was fear.

The Vizir had two daughters. The elder daughter was Sche-hera-zade: she was very beautiful, and brave. The other daughter, Dinarzade, was very good and she did everything her sister asked her to do.

Scheherazade went to her father and said, "Dear father, will you do anything I ask? Say, 'In the name of God, I will do anything that Scheherazade asks.'"

"Yes," said the Vizir, "of course I will do anything which will make you happy."

"I cannot be happy if the Sultan does this thing. I must stop it. You have to find a new wife for the Sultan every day. I ask you to take me."

“I cannot do that,” said the Grand Vizir. “I cannot kill my own daughter!”

“But you said, ‘In the name of God I will do anything that Scheherazade asks.’”

“I said it,” answered the Vizir; “so I must do it.”

Then Scheherazade called her sister Dinarzade and said, “When I go to the Sultan I shall ask him to let you sleep in our room during the last night of my life. You must wake me before sunrise and say, ‘My dear sister, if you are not asleep, please tell me one of your beautiful stories before the sun rises.’ Then I shall begin . . . and in that way I hope to save the people from their fear.”

So the Vizir sent Scheherazade and Dinarzade to the Sultan.

The Sultan said, “Yes, your sister may stay in the room.”

When sunrise was near, Dinarzade said, “My dear sister, if you are not asleep, please tell me one of your beautiful stories.”

Scheherazade said, “O Sultan, may I do what my sister asks?”

“Yes,” answered the Sultan, “you may tell her one of your stories.”

So Scheherazade began.



Scheherazade

Chapter Two

THE RICH MAN AND THE GENIE

O Sultan, there was once a very rich man. One day he set out on a journey, taking with him a small basket of *fruit* and bread to eat on his way.

When the sun became very hot he went to rest under some trees near a river. He sat down and began to eat the fruit; and, as he ate, he threw the fruit-stones behind him.

He began to wash his face and hands in the water. Then he saw a *Genie* behind him.

"Stand up!" cried the Genie, "and let me kill you as you have killed my son."

"But," said the Rich Man, "why do you want to kill me? What have I done?"

"You have killed my son!"

"How can I have killed your son? I have never seen him."

"You sat down under that tree. You took some fruit from that basket and ate it. While you were eating it you threw the fruit-stones behind you."

"Yes," said the Rich Man, "I did."

"My son passed by while you were throwing those stones. One of the stones hit him in the eye and killed him. So I shall kill you!"



“Stand up!” cried the Genie, “and let me kill you”

"I did not mean to kill him," said the Rich Man. "Think of my wife and my children! What will they do if you kill me? I too have a son. Who will take care of him, poor fatherless boy!"

* * * * *

Scheherazade looked up at the window.

"See!" she said, "the sun is rising; so I must stop."

"Dear sister," said Dinarzade, "tell me the end."

"I cannot tell you the end because today I shall die. If the Sultan lets me live one more day, I will tell it."

"Well . . ." said the Sultan, "I will wait until tomorrow so that I may hear the end of the story."

On the next morning before sunrise, Dinarzade said, "Dear sister, if you are awake, I pray you go on with your story."

"Yes!" said the Sultan, "I wish to hear the ending."

* * * * *

Well (said Scheherazade) the Rich Man saw that the Genie meant to cut off his head. So he said, "I pray you to give me some time to go and see my wife and children and to set everything in order. Then I will come back to this place."

"How much time do you want?" said the Genie.

"One year," said the Rich Man. "I will come back on this day one year from now. In the name of God, I say it!"

"Let it be so," said the Genie.

The Rich Man went home and told his wife what had happened. He set everything in order, and, when one year had passed, he kissed her and his son, and set out to go to the place where he first saw the Genie.

While he sat there waiting for the Genie he saw an old man with a deer coming to that place.

The old man said, "What has brought you to this place where there are so many Genii? This is a very dangerous place."



The old man with a deer

The Rich Man told his story.

“Ah!” said the old man, “I must stay and see what happens when the Genie comes.”

So the old man sat down under the tree and waited.

Then another old man came along the road followed by two black dogs.

When the Second Old Man heard the story he said, “Ah! I must stay and see what happens when the Genie comes.”

They waited. Then they saw a cloud—like a cloud of dust. It came nearer and nearer. Then the cloud opened and they saw the Genie.

“Stand up!” cried the Genie, “and I shall kill you, as you have killed my son.”

The Rich Man and the two old men began to weep. Then the old man with the deer threw himself at the Genie's feet and said, “Hear me, I pray you, Genie! I am going to tell you the story of this deer which I am leading. If this story pleases you I ask you to give back to the Rich Man half of his life. And, perhaps, this old man has a story about his two black dogs. If that story pleases you, you may give back to this man the other half of his life and let him go free.”

“Well . . .,” said the Genie. “Yes: it shall be so. But the stories must be good!”

Chapter Three

THE STORY OF THE FIRST OLD MAN AND THE DEER

This deer which you see here is my wife. We had no children.

One of my serving-women had a fine strong little son. So I took him as my son by law. When I die he will get all my money.

Years passed by and my son grew up into a fine young man.

I had to go away on a long journey. Before I went away, I said to my wife, "Please keep my son and his mother safe until I come back."

As soon as I went away my wife began to learn magic. When she had learnt enough she took the servant and her son and changed them into a cow and a calf.

When I came back from my journey, I asked my wife, "Where is my son and where is his mother?" My wife answered, "That servant is dead."

"Where is my son?"

"He has gone away. I have not seen him for two months. I don't know where he is."

I tried to find my son, but could not. Eight months passed.

I wished to give a fine meal to all my friends at the time of Bairam. I ordered my head servant to bring me a very fat cow to be cooked for the meal.

He did this. I did not know that the cow was my son's mother. I was just going to kill her, when I saw that the cow's eyes were full of sadness and she was weeping.

I said to the servant, "Take her away. I cannot kill her."

My wife was very angry. She said, "Why do you not kill the cow? Kill this cow! Kill her!"

"I cannot do it," I said. So the servant led the cow away and killed her; but there was no fat on the cow.

The cook said, "I cannot use this cow for your meal: there is no fat on this animal."

Then I said to the servant, "Bring a fine fat calf. We will have that for our meal."

The servant brought a fine fat calf. I did not know that this calf was my son. The calf threw itself down at my feet and looked up into my eyes. I was very surprised. I said to the servant, "Take this calf away. Take great care of it. Bring me another calf for the meal."

My wife was very angry: "Why do you not kill this calf? Kill this calf!"

But I would not do it.

On the next day my head servant came to me when I was alone. He said, "My daughter knows magic. When I was leading the calf away, she laughed; and



The calf threw itself down at my feet

then she began to weep. I asked her, 'Why did you laugh, and why are you now weeping ?''

"'Father,' she said, 'this calf is his son. I was glad that he had not killed it : so I laughed. Then I wept because of his mother : she was killed by the servant.'"

I went with the head servant to speak to his daughter.

"Can you change my son back into his real form ? Can you do it ?"

She said, "Yes, I can do it, and I will do it if you will do what I ask."

"What do you ask ?"

"I ask that your son shall make me his wife ; and I ask that I may do whatever I wish to that bad woman who changed him into a calf."

I answered, "Yes, you shall be my son's wife. Yes, you may do whatever you like to my wife, but you must not kill her. What will you do to her ?"

"I will do to her what she did to your son."

Then she took a pot of water. She said some magic words over the water. Then she threw the water over the calf, and he became my son.

"My son ! My dear son !" I cried, taking him in my arms and kissing him. "This girl has saved you : I am sure that you wish to take her as your wife."

Then she changed my wife into a deer. I wished her to have this form, rather than the form of a cow, so that she could be with us in the house. Now I am going on a journey to visit my son, and I am bringing my wife with me.

“That is a very good story,” said the Genie. “So I will give back to this man half of his life. But, to get the other half, this old man with the two black dogs, must tell an even better story.”

So the Second Old Man began :

* * * * *

“Ah !” cried Scheherazade, “the sun is up. I must wait until tomorrow to tell you the Second Old Man’s story.”

On the next morning Dinarzade said, “O sister, if you are awake, will you tell me the Second Old Man’s story ?”

So Scheherazade began :

Chapter Four

THE STORY OF THE SECOND OLD MAN AND THE TWO BLACK DOGS

The two black dogs and I are three brothers. When our father died he gave each of us one thousand *sequins*.¹

My elder brother said, "I will take my thousand sequins and travel in other countries, buying and selling, and, when I come back, I shall be a very rich man."

He set out and was away for a whole year.

At the end of this time a poor man came to my house. I said, "Good morning. What do you want?"

"Do you not know me?"

I looked at him closely: he was my brother!

I brought him into my house. I gave him food and new clothes.

"I have lost all my money," he said.

I saw that during the year I had got a thousand sequins by my work: so now I had two thousand sequins. I gave him one thousand sequins and we lived together as we had done before our father died.

¹Gold pieces of money.