



Arabian Nights



by Neil Duffield

A group of Nomads arrive and set up their camp for the night. To amuse themselves they tell stories and act out plays. They tell a story about two brothers Shahzaman and Shahryar and they start to act out the story.

Shahryar is about to be married. His brother, angry at having been betrayed by his own wife says that he must not marry one girl but take a new bride every night. Shahryar does as his brother tells him and executes his new brides on the morning after each wedding. It is the job of the Grand Vizier to find new brides, but he soon runs out of young women and finds that he must offer his own daughters. Sheherazad, the older of the two, volunteers to be the first. She is a clever young woman and delays the wedding by starting to tell a story.....

The story is about two brothers Kasim and Ali. Kasim is a rich merchant, Ali, a poor woodcutter. Ali is at the market when he sees a slave, Marjiana who is about to be sold. Marjiana consents to the sale even though Ali does not have enough money. Miraculously, he finds that some gold coins have appeared in his woodpile (Marjiana has hidden them there). Ali's brother, Kasim, who hoped to buy Marjiana is furious, as is Jawan The Terrible, a robber who also wanted the slave.

Ali's life with Marjiana prospers. One day he is cutting wood in the forest and he sees Jawan The Terrible ride up to a huge rock. Jawan says the words "open sesame" the rock opens into a doorway. Ali realises that this is where Jawan hides the loot from people he has robbed. Ali tries the magic words and finds himself in a cave full of treasure. He takes some home to Marjiana, who feels that taking the treasure was wrong. Ali wants to weigh his treasure so he dashes off to his brothers house. Kasim is suspicious and greedy and tricks Ali into telling him about the cave.

Kasim rushes off to find the cave and see the treasure for himself. He lets himself in using the magic words, but when he tries to get out he forgets how to. Kasim has a terrible night in the cave trying to remember the words to open the rock. He suddenly remembers and is about to say it when Jawan enters from outside. He is furious that his treasure has been found and leaves Kasim unconscious entombed in the cave to rot.

When Ali gets home she makes him go back to the cave to rescue Kasim. Ali is terrified, so Marjiana goes with him. They enter the cave but when Kasim wakes he is again only interested in taking as much of the treasure as he can. Kasim steals a large jar which he drags back to Ali's house

Eventually Kasim is successful and opens the jar, except that instead of treasure, from the jar appears a huge Genie! The genie is so angry at being imprisoned in the jar for thousands of years that he says he will kill whoever releases him. Luckily Marjiana appears and tricks the genie back into his jar. Kasim, realising that again he has no treasure makes off with Ali's gold.

Jawan, meanwhile is bent on revenge. He finds out from a healer woman that Kasim is at Ali's house. She tells Jawan how to get there – but he gets lost, as does Kasim, staggering around the back streets with Ali's treasure. When they bump into each other, Kasim, to save his own skin, says that the treasure belongs to Ali and that Ali knows the secret of the cave. Jawan, still threatening, forces Kasim to get them an invite to Ali's house

Back at the house Kasim arrives and introduces Jawan as a visiting oil merchant who enters dragging a pretend jar of samples. In the jar is hidden one of Jawan's band of robbers. Marjiana is suspicious and she hides in his room and during the night overhears the two plotting. She uncovers the jar with the genie in it, so that Jawan releases the genie thinking that he is letting out one of his men. He is swept off in a mighty wind. The genie is impressed with Marjiana's resourcefulness and offers her a wish. Because she wants Ali safe from the temptation of riches, she asks that the cave and its treasure to be hidden under the sea. Ali sadly realises that Kasim has betrayed him.

Through this story Shahryar, who has been playing Ali realises that his brother Shahzaman, has been an evil influence. He has forced him to be cruel to his wives and Shahryar decides he has had enough. He stands up for himself, telling his brother to leave, Shahzaman has learned his lesson and asks for forgiveness. The two brothers are reconciled and Sheherazad and Shahryar can at last marry happily. With the end of the story the nomads story has come to an end.