

The Story of Sindbad the Sailor



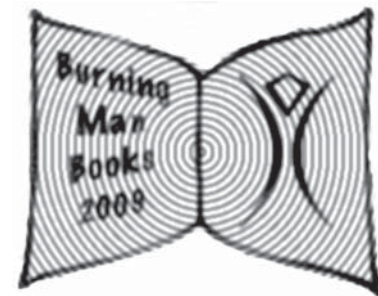
Les marchands cassèrent l'œuf. (Page 117, col. 1.)

from The Arabian Nights

edited by Raymond Soulard, Jr. & Cassandra Soulard

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*When you were young and
the world was too big for you to imagine,
someone else imagined it for you . . .*

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There lived in Baghdad, in the time of the Commander of the Faithful, the Caliph Harun al-Rashid, a man called Sindbad the Porter, who was poor and who carried loads on his head for hire. One day, he was carrying a heavy load, and as it was very hot, he became weary and began to perspire under the burden and the intense heat. Soon he came to the door of a merchant's house, before which the ground was swept and watered, and the air was cool, and as there was a wide bench beside the door, he set his load on the bench to rest and take a breath. As he did so, there came out of the door a pleasant breeze and a lovely fragrance; so he remained sitting on the edge of the bench to enjoy this and heard from within the melodious sounds of lutes and other string instruments accompanying delightful voices singing all kinds of eloquent verses. He also heard the sounds of birds warbling and glorifying the Almighty God, in various voices and tongues, turtledoves, nightingales, thrushes, doves, and curlews. At that he marveled to himself and felt a great delight. He went to the door and saw inside the house a great garden and saw pages, servants, slaves, and attendants, the likes of whom are found only with kings and sultans. And through the door came the aromas of all kinds of fine delicious foods and delicious wine.

He raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Glory be to You, O God, Creator and Provider! You bestow riches on whomever You wish, without reckoning. O Lord, I ask Your forgiveness of all sins and repent to You of all faults. O Lord, there is no argument with Your judgment or Your power. You are not to be questioned on what You do, for You are omnipotent in every thing. Glory be to You! You enrich whomever You wish and impoverish whomever You wish. You exalt whomever You wish and humble whomever You wish. There is no god but You. How great is Your majesty, how mighty Your dominion, and how excellent Your government! You have bestowed favors on one you have chosen of your servants, for the owner of this place is in the height of comfort, enjoying all kinds of pleasant perfumes, delicious foods, and fine beverages. You have foreordained and apportioned to Your creatures what You wish, so that among them some are weary, some comfortable, and some enjoy life, while some, like me, suffer extreme toil and misery." Then he recited the following verses:



*How many wretched men toil without rest,
 And how many enjoy life in the shade!
 My weariness increases every day;
 'Tis strange, how heavy is the burden on me laid!
 Others are prosperous and live in ease,
 Having never my heavy burden known,
 Living in luxury throughout their life,
 Enjoying food and drink and pleasure and renown.
 Yet all God's creatures are of the same species;
 My soul is like this one's and his like mine,
 And yet we are so different, one from one,
 As different as is vinegar from wine.
 And yet, O Lord, I impugn not Thy ways,
 For Thou art wise and just, and all judgment is Thine.*

When the porter finished reciting his verses and was about to carry his load and continue on his way, a young page with a handsome face, fine build, and rich clothes, came out of the door, took his hand, and said, "Come in and speak with my master, for he is asking for you." The porter wanted to refuse but could not. He left his load with the doorkeeper in the hallway and went into the house with the page. He found it to be a handsome mansion, stately but cheerful. Then he came to a great hall in which he saw noblemen and great lords and saw all kinds of flowers and fresh and dried fruits and a great variety of exquisite foods and wines of the finest vintage. And he saw musical instruments and all kinds of beautiful slave-girls, all arranged in the proper order. At the upper end of that hall sat a venerable and majestic man whose beard was turning gray on the sides. He had a handsome appearance and a comely face, and he had an aspect of dignity, reverence, nobility, and majesty. When Sindbad the Porter saw all this, he was confounded and said to himself, "By God, this place is one of the spots of Paradise, or else it is the palace of a king or a sultan." Then he assumed a respectful posture, saluted the assembly, invoked a blessing on them, kissed the ground before them, and stood with his head bowed in humility. The master of the house asked him to sit near him, welcomed him, and spoke kindly to him. Then he set before Sindbad the Porter various kinds of fine, exquisite, and delicious foods. Sindbad the Porter invoked

God, then ate until he was satisfied and said, "Praise be to God." Then he washed his hands and thanked the company.

The master of the house then said, "You are welcome, and your day is blessed. What is your name, and what do you do for a living?" The porter answered him, "Sir, my name is Sindbad the Porter, and I carry on my head people's goods for hire." The master of the house smiled and said to him, "Porter, your name is like mine, for I am called Sindbad the Sailor. I would like you to let me hear the verses you were reciting when you were at the door." The porter was ashamed and said, "For God's sake, don't reproach me, for fatigue, hardship, and poverty teach a man ill manners and impudence." The host said to him, "Do not be ashamed, for you have become a brother to me. Recite the verses, for they pleased me when you recited them at the door." The porter recited to him those verses, and when he heard them, he was pleased and delighted. Then he said, "Porter, my story is astonishing, and I will relate to you all that happened to me before I attained this prosperity and came to sit in this place, where you now see me, for I did not attain this good fortune and this place save after severe toil, great hardships, and many perils. How much toil and trouble I have endured at the beginning! I embarked on seven voyages, and each voyage is a wonderful tale that confounds the mind, and everything happened by fate and divine decree, and there is no escape nor refuge from that which is foreordained."

The First Voyage of Sindbad

Gentlemen, my father was one of the most prominent men and richest merchants, who possessed abundant wealth and property. When I was a little boy, he died and left me many buildings and fields. When I grew up, I seized everything and began to eat and drink freely, associated with young friends, wore nice clothes, and passed my life with my friends and companions, believing that this way of life would last forever and that it would benefit me. I lived in this way for a length of time but finally returned to my senses and awoke from my heedlessness and found that my wealth had gone and my condition had changed. When I came to myself and found that I had lost everything, I was stricken with fear and dismay, and I remembered a saying I had heard before, a saying of

our Lord Solomon, the son of David, that three things are better than three: the day of death is better than the day of birth; a living dog is better than a dead lion; and the grave is better than the palace. Then I gathered all I had of effects and clothes and sold them, together with what was left of my buildings and property and netted three thousand dirhams, thinking that I might travel abroad and recalling what some poet said:

*A man must labor hard to scale the heights,
And to seek greatness must spend sleepless nights,
And to find pearls must plunge into the sea
And so attains good fortune and eminent be.
For he who seeks success without labor
Wastes all his life in a futile endeavor.*

I made my resolve and, having been inclined to take a sea voyage, I bought goods and merchandise, as well as provisions and whatever is needed for travel, and embarked with a group of merchants on a boat bound downstream for Basra. From there, we sailed for many days and nights from sea to sea and from island to island, and sold, bought, and bartered until we came to an island that seemed like one of the gardens of Paradise. There the captain docked, cast anchor, and put forth the landing plank. Then all those who were on the ship landed on that island. They set up wood stoves, lighted fires in them, and busied themselves with various tasks, some cooking, some washing, some sightseeing. I myself was among those who went to explore the place, while the passengers assembled to eat and drink and play games and amuse themselves.

While we were thus engaged, the captain, standing on the side of the ship, cried out at the top of his voice, "O passengers, may God preserve you! Run for your lives, leave your gear, and hurry back to the ship to save yourselves from destruction. For this island where you are is not really an island but a great fish that has settled in the middle of the sea, and the sand has accumulated on it, making it look like an island, and the trees have grown on it a long time. When you lighted the fire on it, it felt the heat and began to move, and it will soon descend with you into the sea, and you will all drown. Save yourselves before you

perish."

When the passengers heard the captain's warning, they hurried to get into the ship, leaving behind their woodstoves, copper cooking pots, and their other gear, together with their goods. Some made it to the ship, but some did not. The island had moved and sunk to the bottom of the sea with everything that was on it, and the roaring sea with its clashing waves closed over it. I, being one of those left behind on the island, sank in the sea with those who sank, but God the Almighty saved me from drowning and provided me with a large wooden tub that the passengers had been using for washing. I held on to it for dear life, got on it, and began to paddle with my feet, while the waves tossed me to the right and left. Meanwhile, the captain spread the sails and pursued his voyage with those who had made it to the ship, without regard for those who were drowning. I kept looking at the ship until it disappeared from my sight, and as night descended, I became sure of perdition. I remained in this condition for a day and a night, but with the help of the wind and the waves, the tub landed me under a high island, with trees overhanging the water. I seized a branch of a tall tree, clung to it, after I had been on the verge of death, and climbed it to the land. I found my feet numb and my soles bore the marks of the nibbling of fish, something of which I had been unaware because of my extreme exhaustion and distress.

I threw myself on the ground like a dead man and, overcome by stupefaction, lost consciousness till the next day, when the sun rose and I woke up on the island. I found that my feet were swollen and that I was reduced to a helpless condition. So I began to move, sometimes dragging myself in a sitting position, sometimes crawling on my knees, and found that the island had abundant fruits and springs of sweet water. I ate those fruits, and after several days I recovered my strength, felt refreshed, and was able to move about. I reflected and, having made myself a crutch from a tree branch, walked along the shores of the island, enjoying the trees and what the Almighty God had created.

I lived in this manner until one day, as I walked along the shore, I saw an indistinct figure in the distance and thought it a wild beast or one of the creatures of the sea. I walked toward it, without ceasing to look at it, and found that it was a magnificent mare tethered by the seashore. I approached her, but she cried at me with a loud cry, and I

was terrified, and as I was about to retreat, a man emerged suddenly from the ground, called to me and pursued me, saying, "Who are you, where do you come from, and what brings you here?" I said to him, "Sir, I am a stranger, and I was on a ship and sank in the sea with some other passengers, but God provided me with a wooden tub, and I got on it and floated until the waves cast me on this island." When he heard my words, he took me by the hand and said, "Come with me." I went with him, and he descended with me to a subterranean vault. We entered a large chamber, and he seated me at the upper end of the chamber and brought me food. I was hungry, and I ate until I was satisfied and felt good. Then he inquired about my situation and what had happened to me. I told him my story from beginning to end, and he marveled at it.

When I finished my story, I said to him, "Sir, I have told you all the particulars of my situation and all that has happened to me. For God's sake, pardon me, for I would like you to tell me who you are, why you live in this subterranean chamber, and why is the mare tethered by the seashore?" He said to me, "I am one of a group of men scattered on this island. We are the grooms of King Mihrajan, in charge of all the horses. Every month, at the new moon, we bring the best mares that have not been bred before and hide in the subterranean chamber, so that no one may see us. Then one of the sea horses comes out to the shore after the scent of the mares and, looking and seeing no one around, mounts one of them. When he finishes with her and dismounts her, he wishes to take her with him, but she cannot follow him, because she is tethered. Then he begins to cry out at her and batter her with his head and hoofs. When we hear his cries, we know that he has dismounted, and we run out, shouting at him, and frighten him back into the sea. Then the mare conceives and bears a mare or a filly worth a fortune, one whose like is not to be found on the face of the earth. This is the time of the coming of the sea horse and, God the Almighty willing, I will take you to King Mihrajan and show you our country. Had you not met us, you would not have found anyone else on this island, and you would have died miserably, and no one would have known of you, but I will save your life and return you to your country." I invoked a blessing on him and thanked him for his help and kindness.

While we were in conversation, a sea horse suddenly came out of the sea and, letting out a great cry, leapt on the mare. When he

finished with her, he dismounted and tried to take her with him but could not, as she resisted, neighing at him. The groom took a sword and buckler and ran out, shouting to his companions, "Run to the sea horse," as he hit the buckler with the sword. Then a group of them came out, shouting and brandishing spears. The sea horse, frightened by them, ran away, plunged into the water like a buffalo, and disappeared. As the groom sat down to rest for a while, his companions came, each leading a mare. When they saw me with him, they inquired about my situation, and I repeated to them what I had told him. Then they drew near me and, spreading the table, ate and invited me to eat; so I ate with them. Then they rode the mares and gave me one to ride, and we traveled until we reached the city of King Mihrajan.

Then they went in to see him and acquainted him with my story, and he sent for me, and they led me in and made me stand before him. I saluted him, and he returned my salutation, welcomed me, greeted me in a courteous manner, and inquired about my situation. I related to him what had happened to me and what I had seen from beginning to end, and he marveled at my story, saying, "By God, my son, you have had an extraordinary escape, and had you not been destined to a long life, you would not have escaped from these difficulties, but God be praised for your safety." Then he treated me kindly and honored me and, seating me near him, engaged me in friendly conversation. Then he made me his agent to the port and registrar of all the ships that landed. I stood in his presence to transact his affairs, and he treated me generously, bestowed a fine, rich suit on me, and rewarded me in every way. I became a person of high esteem with him, interceding for the people and facilitating their business.

I remained with him for a long time, but whenever I went to the port, I used to ask the merchants and the sailors about the direction of the city of Baghdad, hoping that someone might inform me and I go with him and return to my country, but no one knew it, nor knew anyone who went there. I was perplexed, and I had grown weary of my long absence from home, and I continued to feel this way for some time.

One day I went in to see King Mihrajan and found with him a group of Indians. I saluted them and they returned my salutation, welcomed me, and asked me about my country. Then I asked them

about theirs, and they told me that they consisted of various races. One is called the Kshatriyas, who are the noblest of their races and who oppress no one, nor inflict violence on anyone. Another is called the Brahmans, who abstain from wine but live in joy, sport, merriment, and prosperity, possessing horses, camels, and cattle. They told me, moreover, that the Indians consist of seventy-two castes, and I marveled at that.

Among other things, I saw in the dominion of King Mihrajan an island called Kabil, on which the beating of drums and tambourines is heard all night long and whose inhabitants are reported by travelers and neighboring islanders to be people of judgment and serious pursuits. I saw in the sea a fish four hundred feet long and saw fish with faces that resembled the faces of owls. During that voyage, I saw many strange and wonderful things, which would take too long to relate to you.

I continued to divert myself with the sights of those islands until one day, as I stood in the port, with a staff in my hand, as was my custom, a large ship approached, carrying many merchants. When it entered the harbor and reached the pier, the captain furled the sails, cast anchor, and put forth the landing plank. Then the crew brought out to shore everything that was in the ship and took a long time in doing so, while I stood writing their account. I said to the captain, "Is there anything left in the ship?" He replied, "Yes, sir, I have some goods in the hold of the ship, but their owner drowned at one of the islands during our voyage here; so his goods remained in our charge, and our intention is to sell them and keep a record, so that we may give the money to his family in the city of Baghdad, the Abode of Peace." I asked the captain, "What was the name of the merchant, the owner of the goods?" He said, "His name was Sindbad the Sailor." When I heard these words, I looked carefully at him and, recognizing him, cried out loudly, saying, "Captain, I am the owner of the goods; I am that Sindbad who landed from the ship on the island, with the other merchants, and when the fish moved, and you called out to us, some of us got into the ship, and the rest sank. I was among those who sank, but God the Almighty preserved me and saved me from drowning by means of a wooden tub that the passengers had used for washing. I got on the tub and paddled with my feet, and the wind and the waves brought me to this island, where I landed and where, with the help of the Almighty God, I met

the grooms of King Mihrajan, who brought me with them to this city and took me to the king, to whom I related my story, and he treated me generously and made me clerk of the harbor of this city, and he appreciated my services and rewarded me accordingly. These goods in your charge are my goods and possessions."

The captain said, "There is no power and no strength, save in God, the Almighty, the Magnificent. There is neither conscience nor trust left among men." I said to him, "Captain, why those words, after you heard me telling you my story?" The captain replied, "Because you heard me say that I have with me goods whose owner has drowned, you are trying to take them without any rightful claim, and this is unlawful. We saw the owner drown with many other passengers, none of whom escaped. How can you claim that you are the owner of the goods?" I said to him, "Captain, listen to my story and try to understand, and you will discover my veracity, for lying is the mark of a hypocrite." Then I enumerated to him everything I had with me, from the time I left Baghdad with him until we reached that island, where we sank in the sea, and I mentioned to him some incidents that had occurred between him and me. The captain and the other merchants then became convinced of my veracity, and they recognized me and congratulated me on my safety. All of them said, "We never believed that you had escaped from drowning, but God has granted you a new life." Then they gave me my goods, and we found my name written on them, and nothing was missing. Then I opened them and took out something precious and costly, and the crew of the ship carried it with me to the king as a gift. I told him that this ship is the one in which I had been a passenger and that all my goods were intact and in perfect order and that this present was a part of them. The king was amazed and was even more convinced of my truthfulness in everything I had told him. He felt a deep affection for me, treated me with great generosity, and gave me many presents in return for mine.

Then I sold my goods and all my other property and made a great profit. Then I bought goods, gear, and provisions from that city, and when the merchants were about to depart, I loaded everything I had on the ship and went in to see the king. I thanked him for his kindness and generosity and asked his permission to return to my country and family. He bade me farewell and gave me a great many of the products

of that country for my voyage. I bade him farewell and embarked. Then we set sail with the permission of the Almighty God, and fortune served us and fate favored us, as we journeyed day and night until we reached Basra safely.

After staying in Basra for a short time rejoicing in my return to my country, I headed for Baghdad, the Abode of Peace, carrying with me an abundance of merchandise, provisions, and gear of great value. I went to my quarter and entered my house, and all my relatives and friends came to see me. Then I acquired a great number of servants and attendants and concubines and bought slaves, both black and white. Then I bought houses and other properties that exceeded what I had had before. And I associated with friends and companions, exceeding my former habits, and forgot all I had suffered of toil, exile, hardship, and perils, indulging for a long time in amusements and pleasures and delicious food and fine drink. This was my first voyage. Tomorrow, the Almighty God willing, I will tell you the story of the second of my seven voyages.

Then Sindbad the Sailor had Sindbad the Porter dine with him and gave him a hundred pieces of gold, saying to him, "You have cheered us today." The porter thanked him, took his present, and went on his way, meditating and marveling at the events that befall mankind. He spent that night at home, and as soon as it was morning, he went to the house of Sindbad the Sailor, who welcomed him, spoke courteously to him, and asked him to sit. When the rest of his companions arrived, he set food and drink before them, and when they were cheerful and merry, he said to them:

The Second Voyage of Sindbad

Friends, as I told you yesterday, I lived a most enjoyable life of unalloyed pleasure until it occurred to me one day to travel abroad, and I felt a longing for trading, seeing other countries and islands, and making profit. Having made my resolve, I took out a large sum of money and bought goods and travel gear, packed them up, and went down to the shore. There I found a fine new ship, with sails of good cloth, numerous crewmen, and abundant equipment. I loaded my bales on it, as did a group of other merchants, and we sailed on the same day. We sailed

under fair weather and journeyed from sea to sea and from island to island, and wherever we landed, we met merchants, high officials, and sellers and buyers, and we sold, bought, and bartered.

We continued in this fashion until fate brought us to a beautiful island abounding with trees, ripe fruits, fragrant flowers, singing birds, and clear streams, but there was not a single inhabitant nor a breathing soul around. The captain anchored the ship at the island, and the merchants and other passengers landed there, to divert themselves with the sight of the trees and birds and to glorify the One Omnipotent God and wonder at the power of the Almighty King. I landed with the rest and sat down by a spring of pure water among the trees. I had with me some food, and I sat there eating what the Almighty God had allotted me. The breeze was cool, and the place was pleasant; so I dozed off and rested there until the sweetness of the breeze and fragrance of the flowers lulled me into a deep sleep.

When I awoke, I did not find a single soul around, neither man nor demon. The ship had sailed with all the passengers and left me behind, none of the merchants or the crew taking any notice of me. I searched right and left, but found no one but myself. I felt extremely unhappy and outraged, and my spleen was about to burst from the severity of my anxiety, grief, and fatigue, for I was all alone with nothing of worldly goods and without food or drink. I felt desolate and despaired of life, saying to myself, "Not every time the jar is saved in time. If I escaped safely the first time, by finding someone who took me with him from the shore of that island to the inhabited part, this time I am very far from the prospect of finding someone who will deliver me out of here." Then I began to weep and wail for myself until I was completely overcome by grief, blaming myself for what I had done and for having embarked on the hardships of travel, after I had been reposing peacefully in my own house and in my own country, happily enjoying good food and good drink and good clothes, without need for money or goods. I regretted leaving Baghdad on this sea journey, especially after the hardships I had endured on the first and after my narrow escape from destruction, saying, "We are God's and to God we return." I felt like a madman.

At last, I arose and began to walk on the island, turning right and left, for I was unable to sit still in any one place. Then I climbed a

tall tree and looked to the right and left but saw nothing but sky and water and trees and birds and islands and sands. Then I looked closely and saw a large, white object. I climbed down and walked in its direction until I reached it and found it to be a huge white dome of great height and circumference. I drew closer and walked around it but found that it had no door, and because of its extreme smoothness, I had neither the power nor the nimbleness to climb it. I marked the spot where I stood and went around the dome to measure its circumference and found it to be a good fifty paces. I stood, thinking of a way to get inside, as the day was about to end and the sun was about to set. Suddenly, the sun disappeared, and it grew dark. I therefore thought that a cloud had come over the sun, but since it was summer, I wondered at that. I raised my head to look at the object and saw that it was a great bird, with a huge body and outspread wings, flying in the air and veiling the sun from the island. My wonder increased, and I recalled a story I heard from tourists and travelers that there is on certain islands an enormous bird, called the Rukh, which feeds its young on elephants, and I became certain that the dome I saw was one of the Rukh's eggs and wondered at the works of God the Almighty.

While I was in this state, the bird alighted on the egg and brooded over it with its wing and, stretching its legs behind on the ground, went to sleep. Glory be to Him who never sleeps! I unwound my turban, twisted it with a rope and, girding my waist with it, tied it fast to the bird's feet, saying to myself, "Perhaps, this bird will carry me to a land where there are cities and people. That will be better than staying on this island." I spent that night without sleep, fearing that the bird might fly with me while I was unaware. When dawn broke and it was light, the bird rose from its egg, uttered a loud cry, and flew with me up into the sky. It soared higher and higher until I thought that it had reached the pinnacle of heaven. Then it began to descend gradually until it alighted with me on the ground, resting on a high place. As soon as I reached the ground, I hastened to unbind myself, and, loosening my turban from its feet, while shaking with fear, although it was unaware and took no notice of me, I walked away. Then it picked up something with its talons from the ground and flew high into the sky. When I looked at it carefully, I saw that it was an enormous serpent, which the bird had taken and flown with toward the sea. And I wondered at that.

Then I walked about the place and found myself on a crest overlooking a large, wide, and deep valley at the foot of a huge and lofty mountain that was so high no one could see the top nor climb to it, so I blamed myself for what I had done, saying, "I wish that I had stayed on the island, which is better than this desolate place, for there I might at least have eaten of its various fruits and drunk from its streams, whereas this place has neither trees nor fruits nor streams. There is no power and no strength save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent. Every time I escape from a calamity, I fall into one that is greater and more perilous." Then I arose and, gathering my strength, walked in that valley and saw that its ground was composed of diamonds, with which they perforate minerals and jewels, as well as porcelain and onyx, which is such a hard and dense stone that neither stone nor steel has any effect on it and which nobody can cut or break except with the leadstone. Moreover, the valley was full of serpents and snakes, each as big as a palm tree, indeed so huge that it could swallow an elephant. These serpents came out at night and hid themselves during the day, fearing that the Rukh or eagles might carry them away and cut them in pieces, for a reason of which I was unaware. I stood there, regretting what I had done and saying to myself, "By God, I have hastened my own destruction."

As the day was waning, I walked in that valley and began looking for a place to spend the night, being afraid of the serpents, forgetting my food and drink and subsistence, and thinking only of saving my life. Soon I saw a cave nearby. It had a narrow entrance, and when I went in I saw a big stone lying by that entrance. I pushed the stone and closed the entrance from the inside, saying to myself, "I am safe here now, and as soon as it is day, I will go out and see what fate will bring." But when I took a look inside, I saw a huge snake brooding over its eggs. My hair stood on end, and I raised my head, committing myself to fate and divine decree. I spent the entire night without sleep, and as soon as it was dawn, I removed the stone with which I had closed the entrance of the cave and went out, like a drunken man, feeling dizzy from excessive hunger, sleeplessness, and fear.

I walked in the valley in this condition, when suddenly a big slaughtered sheep fell before me, but when I saw no one else around, I was amazed, and I recalled a story I used to hear a long time ago from some merchants, tourists, and travelers that the mountains of the

diamonds are so perilous that no one can gain access to them, but that the merchants who deal in diamonds employ a device to get them. They take a sheep, slaughter it, skin it, cut up the meat, and throw it from the top of the mountain into the valley. When the meat falls, still fresh, the diamonds stick to it. Then they leave it there till midday, when the eagles and vultures swoop down on it, pick it up with their talons, and fly with it to the top of the mountain. The merchants then rush, shouting at them, and scare them away from the meat. Then the merchants come to the meat, take the diamonds sticking to it, and carry them back to their country. No one can obtain diamonds except by this method.

When I saw that slaughtered sheep and recalled that story, I approached the carcass and began to pick a great number of diamonds and to put them into my pockets and the folds of my clothes, and I continued to fill my pockets, my clothes, my belt, and my turban. While I was thus engaged, another carcass suddenly fell before me. I bound myself to it with my turban and, lying on my back, placed it on my chest and held on to it. Thus it was raised above the ground. Suddenly, an eagle swooped down on it, caught it with his talons, and flew up into the air with it and with me clinging to it. The eagle continued to soar until it reached the top of the mountain and, alighting there, was about to tear off a piece of meat, when suddenly a loud cry and the sound of clattering with a piece of wood came from behind the eagle, who took fright and flew away.

I unbound myself from the carcass, with my clothes stained with its blood, and stood by its side. Suddenly, the merchant, who had shouted at the eagle, approached the carcass and saw me standing there, but he did not utter a word, for he was frightened of me. Then he came closer to the carcass, and when he turned it over and found nothing on it, he uttered a loud cry and said, "What a disappointment! There is no power and no strength, save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent. May God save us from Satan the accursed," and he kept expressing regret, wringing his hands and saying, "What a pity! How did this happen?" I went to him, and he said to me, "Who are you, and what brings you to this place?" I said to him, "Don't be afraid, for I am a human being, and one of the best men. I was a merchant, and I have a strange and extraordinary tale to tell, and the reason for my coming to this valley and this mountain is marvelous to relate. Don't worry, for

you will receive from me what will please you. I have with me a great deal of diamonds, each one better than what you would have gotten, and I will give you a portion that will satisfy you. Don't fear and don't worry." When he heard this, he thanked me and invoked a blessing on me, and we began to converse.

When the other merchants, each of whom had thrown down a slaughtered sheep, heard me conversing with their companion, they came to meet me. They saluted me, congratulated me on my safety, and took me with them. I told them my whole story, relating to them what I had suffered on this voyage and the cause of my coming to this valley. Then I gave the merchant, to whose slaughtered sheep I had attached myself, a large portion of diamonds, and that made him happy, and he thanked me and invoked a blessing on me, and the merchants said to me, "By God, you have been granted a new life, for no one has come to this place before and escaped from it, but God be praised for your safety." They spent the night in a pleasant and safe place, and I spent the night with them, extremely happy for my safe escape from the Valley of Serpents and my arrival in an inhabited place.

When it was morning, we arose and journeyed along the ridge of the high mountain, seeing many snakes in the valley below, and we continued walking until we came to a large and pleasant island with a grove of camphor trees, each of which might provide a hundred men with shade. When someone wishes to obtain some camphor, he makes a perforation in the upper part of the tree with a piercing rod and catches what descends from it. The liquid camphor, which is the juice of that tree, flows and later hardens, like gum. Afterwards, the tree dries and becomes firewood. We also saw in that island, besides cattle, a kind of beast called the rhinoceros, which pastures as cows and buffaloes do in our country, and feeds on the leaves of trees, but the body of that beast is bigger than that of a camel. It is a huge beast, with a single horn in the middle of its head, thick and twenty feet long and resembling the figure of a man. Travelers and tourists on land and in the mountains report that this beast called the rhinoceros carries a huge elephant on its horn and grazes with it in the island and on the shores, without feeling its weight, and when the elephant dies on the horn, its fat melts under the heat of the sun and flows on the head of the rhinoceros and, entering his eyes, blinds it. Then it lies down by the shore, and the Rukh picks it

up with its talons and carries it together with the elephant to feed to its young. I also saw in that island a great number of a certain kind of buffalo, the like of which is not seen among us.

The merchants exchanged goods and provisions with me and paid me money for some of the diamonds I carried in my pockets from the valley. They carried my goods for me, and I journeyed with them, from town to town and from valley to valley, buying and selling and viewing foreign countries and what God has created until we reached Basra, where I stayed for a few days, then headed for Baghdad. When I reached my quarter and entered my home, with a great quantity of diamonds and a considerable amount of goods and provisions, I met with my family and other relatives and gave alms and distributed presents to all my relatives and friends. Then I began to eat and drink well and wear handsome clothes, associating with friends and companions and forgetting all I had suffered, and I continued to lead a happy, merry, and carefree life of sport and merriment. And all who heard of my return came to me and inquired about my voyage and the countries I saw, and I told them, relating to them what I had seen and what I had suffered, and they were amazed at the extent of my hardships and congratulated me on my safety. That was the end of the second voyage. Tomorrow, the Almighty God willing, I will tell you the story of my third voyage.

When Sindbad the Sailor finished telling his story to Sindbad the Porter and the other guests, they all marveled at it. After they had supper, he gave Sindbad the Porter a hundred pieces of gold, which he took and, after thanking Sindbad the Sailor and invoking a blessing on him, went on his way, marveling at what Sindbad had suffered. The following day, as soon as it was light, the porter arose, and after performing his morning prayer, came to the house of Sindbad, as he had bidden him. The porter went in, wished him good morning, and Sindbad welcomed him and sat with him until the rest of his friends and companions arrived. After they had eaten and drunk and enjoyed themselves and felt relaxed and merry, Sindbad the Sailor began his story.

The Third Voyage of Sindbad

Friends, the story of my third voyage is more amazing than the two you have already heard, and God in His wisdom knows best what He keeps hidden. When I returned from my second voyage, I led a life of ease and happiness, rejoicing in my safety, having gained great wealth, for God had compensated me for everything I had lost, as I had related to you yesterday. I lived in Baghdad for some time, in prosperity and peace and happiness, until my soul began to long for travel and sightseeing and commerce and profit, and the soul is naturally prone to evil. Having made my resolve, I bought a great quantity of goods suited for a sea voyage, packed them up, and journeyed with them from Baghdad to Basra. Then I went to the seashore where I found a large ship in which there were many merchants and other passengers who seemed to be good people—men of rectitude, piety, and kindness. I embarked with them on that ship, and we sailed, relying on the blessing and aid and favor of the Almighty God, feeling happy in the expectation of a safe and prosperous voyage. We sailed from sea to sea and from island to island and from city to city, buying and selling and diverting ourselves with the sights and feeling exceedingly content and happy until one day we found ourselves in the middle of a roaring, raging sea. The captain stood at the side of the ship and examined the sea in all directions. Then he slapped his face, furled the sails, cast the anchors, plucked his beard, tore his clothes, and uttered a loud cry. When we asked him, “Captain, what is the matter?” he said, “O fellows, may God preserve you. The wind has prevailed against us and forced us into the middle of the sea, and fate and our ill fortune have brought us to the Mountain of the Apes. No one has ever come here and escaped safely.” I was sure that we were all going to perish, and no sooner had the captain finished his speech than the ship was surrounded by ape-like creatures who came in great number, like locusts, and swarmed on the boat and on the shore. We were afraid that if we killed, struck, or chased away any of them, they would easily kill us because of their number, for numbers prevail over courage. We also feared that they would plunder our goods and provisions. They are the ugliest of beasts, with a terrifying appearance, covered with hair like black felt. They have black faces, yellow eyes, and small size, no more than four spans. No one understands

their language nor knows who they are, for they shun the society of men. They climbed up the anchor cables of the ship, on every side, and cut them with their teeth, and they cut likewise all the ropes; so the ship swerved with the wind and stopped on the shore, below the mountain. They seized all the merchants and the other passengers and, landing us on the island, took the ship with everything in it and disappeared into an unknown place, leaving us behind.

We stayed on the island, eating of its vegetables and fruits and drinking of its streams until one day we saw a stately mansion, situated in the middle of the island. We walked in its direction, and when we reached it, we found it to be a strong castle, with high walls and a gate of ebony, with two leaves, both of which were open. We entered and found inside a large courtyard, around which there were many high doors, and at the upper end of which there was a large, high bench, on which rested stoves and copper cooking pots hanging above. Around the bench lay many scattered bones. But we saw no one and were very much surprised. Then we sat down in the courtyard for a while and soon fell asleep and slept from mid-morning till sundown, when suddenly we felt the earth trembling under us, heard a rumbling noise in the air, and saw descending on us from the top of the castle a huge figure in the likeness of a man, black in color and tall in stature, as if he were a huge palm-tree, with eyes like torches; fangs like the tusks of a boar; a big mouth, like the mouth of a whale; lips like the lips of a camel, hanging down on his breast; ears like two barges, hanging down on his shoulders; and nails like the claws of a lion. When we saw him, we fainted, like men stricken dead with anxiety and terror.

When he descended, he sat on the bench for a while, then he got up and, coming to us, grabbed my hand from among my fellow merchants and, lifting me up in the air, turned me over, as I dangled from his hand like a little morsel, and felt my body as a butcher feels a sheep for the slaughter. But finding me feeble from grief, lean from the toil of the journey, and without much meat, he let me go and picked up one of my companions, turned him over, felt him, as he had done with me, and released him. He kept turning us over and feeling us, one after one, until he came to the captain of our ship, who was a fat, stout, and broad-shouldered man, a man of vigor and vitality. He was pleased by the captain, and he seized him, as a butcher seizes an animal he is about

to slaughter, and, throwing him on the ground, set his foot on his neck and broke it. Then he fetched a long spit and thrust it through the captain's mouth until it came out from his posterior. Then he lit a big fire and set over it the spit on which the captain was spitted, turning it over the coal, until the flesh was roasted. Then he took the spit off the fire and, placing the body before him, separated the joints, as one separates the joints of a chicken, and proceeded to tear the flesh with his nails and eat it until he devoured all the flesh and gnawed the bones, and nothing was left of the captain except some bones, which he threw on one side. Then he sat on the bench for a while and fell asleep, snoring like a slaughtered sheep or cow, and slept till morning, when he got up and went on his way.

When we were sure that he was gone, we began to talk with one another, weeping for ourselves and saying, "We wish that we had drowned in the sea or been eaten by the apes, for that would have been better than being roasted on the coals. By God, this is a vile death, but what God wills comes to pass, and there is no power and no strength save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent. We will die miserably, and no one will know, for there is no escape from this place." We got up and walked in the island to look for a means of escape or a place to hide, feeling that death was lighter to bear than being roasted on the fire. But we failed to find a hiding place, and as the evening overtook us, we returned to the castle, driven by great fear.

No sooner had we sat down than the earth began to tremble under us, and that black creature approached us and began to turn us over and feel us, one after one, as he had done the first time, until he found one he liked, seized him, and did to him what he had done to the captain, on the first day. Then he roasted him and, after eating him, lay down on the bench and slept, snoring all night, like a slaughtered beast. In the morning, he got up and went on his way, leaving us, as usual.

We drew together and said to one another, "By God, if we throw ourselves into the sea and drown, it will be better than dying by fire, for this is a horrible death." One of us said, "Listen to me! Let us find a way to kill him and rid ourselves of this affliction and relieve all Muslims of his aggression and tyranny." I said to them, "Listen, friends! If we have to kill him, let us transport these planks of wood and some of the firewood and make for ourselves a raft and, after we find a way to kill

him, embark on the raft and let the sea take us wherever God wishes. Then we will sit there until a ship passes by and picks us up. And if we fail to kill him, we can still embark on the raft and set out in the sea, even though we may drown, in order that we may escape from being slaughtered and roasted on the fire. If we escape, we escape, and if we drown, we die like martyrs.” They all replied, “By God, this is a good plan,” and we agreed to carry it out; so we carried the wood out of the castle, built a raft, tied it to the seashore and, after putting some food on it, returned to the castle.

When it was evening, the earth trembled under us, and in came the black creature, like a raging dog. He proceeded to turn us over and to feel us, one after one, until he picked one of us and did to him what he had done to his predecessors. Then he ate him and lay to sleep on the bench, snoring like thunder. We got up, took two of the iron spits of those set up there, and put them in the blazing fire until they became red-hot, like burning coals. Then, gripping the spits tightly, we went to the black creature, who was fast asleep, snoring, and, pushing the spits with all our united strength and determination thrust them deep into his eyes. He uttered a great, terrifying cry. Then he got up resolutely from the bench and began to search for us, while we fled from him to the right and left, in unspeakable terror, sure of destruction and despairing of escape. But being blind, he was unable to see us, and he groped his way to the door, and went out, as his screams made the ground tremble under us and made us quake with terror. When he went out, we followed him, as he went searching for us. Then he returned with a female, even bigger than he and more hideous in appearance. When we saw him and saw that his female companion was more horrible than he, we were in utmost terror. When the female saw us, we hurried to the raft, untied it and, embarking on it, pushed it into the sea, while the two stood, throwing big rocks on us until most of us died, except for three, I and two companions.

The raft conveyed us to another island. There, we walked till the end of the day, and, when it was night, we went to sleep. We were barely asleep when we were aroused by an enormous serpent with a wide belly. It surrounded us and, approaching one of us, swallowed him to his shoulders, then swallowed the rest of him, and we heard his ribs crack inside its belly. Then it went on its way, leaving us in utter

amazement and grief for our companion and fear for our lives, thinking to ourselves, “By God, this is amazing, for each death is more terrible than the preceding one. We rejoiced at our escape from the black creatures, but our joy did not last. There is no power and no strength, save in God. By God, we have escaped from the black creature and from drowning, but how shall we escape from this accursed monster?”

Then we walked in the island, eating of its fruits and drinking of its streams, and when it was evening, we found a huge, tall tree, climbed it, and went to sleep there, I myself being on the highest branch. As soon as it was dark, the serpent came and, looking right and left, headed for the tree on which we were, and climbed until it reached my companion. Then it swallowed him to his shoulders, coiled with him around the tree, as I heard his bones crack in its belly, then swallowed him whole, while I looked on. Then it slid down from the tree and went on its way. I stayed on the tree for the rest of the night, and when it was daylight, I climbed down, like a man stricken dead with terror. I thought of throwing myself into the sea and delivering myself from the world. But I could not bring myself to do it, for life is dear. So I tied a wide piece of wood crosswise to my feet, tied two similar ones to my right side, to my left side, and to my chest, and tied another, very wide and long crosswise to my head. Thus I was in the middle of these pieces of wood which surrounded me and, having fastened them tightly to my body, I threw myself on the ground and lay, with the wood enclosing me like a closet.

When it was dark, the serpent came, as usual, saw me, and headed for me, but it could not swallow me with the wood surrounding me. Then it began to circle around me, while I looked on, like a man stricken dead with terror. Then the serpent began to turn away from me and come back to me, and every time it tried to swallow me it was prevented by the wood that was tied to me on every side, and it continued in this fashion from sunset to sunrise. When it was light, it went its way, in the utmost vexation and rage. Then I moved my hands and untied myself from the pieces of wood, feeling almost dead from what I had suffered from that serpent.

I then walked in the island until I reached the shore and, happening to look toward the sea, saw a ship on the waves, in the distance. I took a big branch and began to make signs with it and call out to the

passengers. When they saw me, they said to each other, "We must see what this is, for it may be a man." They came closer, and when they heard my cries for help, they came to me and took me with them in the ship. Then they inquired about my situation, and I related to them what had happened to me, from beginning to end, and what hardships I had suffered, and they marveled at that. Then they gave me some of their clothes to make myself decent and offered me some food and some cool sweet water. I ate and drank until I had enough, and I felt refreshed, relaxed, and very comfortable, and my vigor returned. God the Almighty had brought me to life after death, and I thanked Him and praised Him for his abundant blessings, after I had been certain of destruction, thinking that I was in a dream.

We sailed, with God's permission, with a fair wind, until we came to an island called the Salahita Island. The captain cast anchor there, and all the merchants and other passengers landed with their goods to sell and buy. Then the captain turned to me and said, "Listen to me! You are a poor stranger who has, as you told us, suffered many horrors, and I wish to benefit you with something that will help you to return to your country, so that you will pray for me." I replied, "Very well, you will have my prayers." He said, "There was a passenger with us whom we lost, and we don't know whether he is alive or dead, for he has left no trace. I would like to give you his goods, and you will take charge of them to sell them in this island, and we will pay you an amount commensurate with your work and trouble and take the rest with us back to Baghdad, find his family, and give it to them, together with the proceeds of the sale. Will you receive the goods and take them to the island to sell them, like the other merchants?" I replied, "Sir, I hear and obey, with gratitude and thanks," and I invoked a blessing on him and thanked him. He then ordered the porters and sailors to carry the goods to the island and deliver them to me. The ship's clerk said to him, "What are those bales that the porters and sailors are carrying out and in whose merchant's name shall I register them?" The captain replied, "Register them in the name of Sindbad the Sailor, who was with us on that island and who drowned, without leaving any trace. I wish this stranger to sell these goods, and I will give him an amount commensurate with his work and trouble and keep the rest of the money with us until we reach Baghdad and, if we find Sindbad, give it to him and, if we don't, give it

to his family." The clerk replied, "This is a good and wise plan." When I heard the captain mention that the goods were in my name, I said to myself, "By God, I am Sindbad the Sailor who was lost on that island!"

Then I controlled myself and waited patiently until the merchants came back to the ship and assembled to chat and consult on the affairs of buying and selling. I approached the captain and said to him, "Sir, do you know anything about the man whose goods you gave me to sell?" The captain replied, "I know nothing about him, except that he was a man from Baghdad, called Sindbad the Sailor. We cast anchor at one of the islands, and he was lost, and we have not heard anything about him to this day." I uttered a great cry and said, "O captain, may God preserve you! I am Sindbad the Sailor. When you cast anchor at that island, and the merchants and the rest of the passengers landed, I landed with them. I took with me something to eat, and sat in a place, enjoying myself; then I dozed off and fell into a deep sleep." When the merchants and the other passengers heard my words, they gathered around me, some believing me, some disbelieving. Soon, one of the merchants, hearing me mention the valley of diamonds approached me and said to them, "Listen to what I have to say, fellows! When I related to you the most extraordinary events that I encountered in my travels and how the merchants threw the slaughtered sheep into the valley of diamonds, and I threw mine with theirs, as was my habit, and how I found a man attached to my slaughtered sheep, you did not believe me and thought that I was lying." They said, "Yes, you did tell us that story, and we did not believe you." The merchant said, "This is the very man who gave me the unmatched expensive diamonds, compensating me with more than I would have gotten from my slaughtered sheep, and who traveled with me as my companion until we reached Basra, where he bade us farewell and headed to his city, while we returned to ours. This is the very man who told us that his name was Sindbad the Sailor and related to us how the ship had left, while he was sitting in that island. This man has come to us, in order that you may believe my story. All those goods are his property, for he informed us of them when he first met us, and the truth of his words is evident." When the captain heard the merchant's words, he stood up and, coming up to me, stared at me for a while and asked me, "What is the mark on your bales?" I said, "The mark is such and such," and when I informed him of a matter

that had occurred between us when I embarked in the ship, in Basra, he became convinced that I was indeed Sindbad the Sailor, and he embraced me, saluted me, and congratulated me on my safety, saying, "By God, sir, your story is extraordinary and wonderful. God be praised for reuniting you with us and returning your goods and property to you."

Afterwards, I disposed of my goods, according to the best of my skill, and made a great deal of profit, and I felt exceedingly happy and congratulated myself on my safety and the recovery of my property. We continued to sell and buy in the islands until we reached the Indus Valley, where we likewise sold and bought and enjoyed the sights. I saw in the sea there many wonders and strange things. Among the things I saw was a fish in the form of a cow and a creature in the form of an ass. I also saw a bird that comes out of a seashell, lays its eggs on the surface of the water, and hatches them there but never comes up from the sea to the land.

Then we continued our voyage, with God's permission, until, with the aid of a fair wind, we reached Basra, where I stayed for a short time and headed for Baghdad. I went to my house, where I greeted my family and my friends and companions, rejoicing in my safe return to my country and city and home and family. I gave alms and gifts and clothed the widows and the orphans. Then I gathered around me my friends and companions and began to enjoy myself with them, eating well and drinking well, and diverting and entertaining myself, and I forgot all that had happened to me and all the hardships and perils I had suffered. On that voyage, I gained what cannot be numbered or calculated. These then were the most extraordinary events of that voyage. Tomorrow, God willing, come to me, and I will tell you the story of the fourth voyage, which is more wonderful than those of the preceding voyages.

Then Sindbad the Sailor gave the porter a hundred pieces of gold, as usual, and ordered that the table be spread. After the table was spread, and the guests dined, still marveling at that story and its events, the porter took the money and went on his way, marveling at what he had heard. The porter spent the night in his house, and as soon as it was morning, he performed his morning prayer and headed to Sindbad the Sailor. He went in and saluted him, and Sindbad received him with gladness and cheer and sat with him until the rest of his companions

arrived. When food was served, and they ate and drank and felt merry, Sindbad began his story, saying:

The Fourth Voyage of Sindbad

Friends, when I returned to Baghdad and to the society of my family and friends and companions, I lived in the utmost happiness, pleasure, and ease and forgot what I had experienced, because of my great profit and my immersion in sport and mirth in the society of friends and companions. Thus I lived a most delightful life until my wicked soul suggested to me to travel to foreign countries, and I felt a longing for meeting other races and for selling and gain. Having made my resolve, I purchased precious goods, suited for a sea voyage, and, having packed up more bales than usual, journeyed from Baghdad to Basra, where I loaded my bales in a ship and embarked with some of the chief merchants of the town.

We set out on our voyage and sailed, with the blessing of the Almighty God, in the sea, and the journey was pleasant, as we sailed, for many nights and days, from sea to sea and island to island until one day a contrary wind rose against us. So the captain cast the ship's anchors and brought it to a standstill, fearing that it would sink in midocean. While we were praying and imploring the Almighty God, a violent storm suddenly blew against us, tore the sails to pieces, and threw the people, with all their bales, provisions, and possessions, into the sea. I too was submerged like the rest. I kept myself afloat half the day, and when I was about to give up, the Almighty God provided me with one of the wooden planks of the ship, and I and some other merchants climbed on it, and we paddled with our feet, with the aid of the wind and the waves, for a day and a night. On the midmorning of the following day, a squall blew, and the waves rose, casting us on an island, almost dead from lack of sleep, exhaustion, hunger, thirst, and fear.

We walked along the shores of that island and found abundant vegetation, of which we ate a little to stay our hunger and to sustain ourselves. We spent the night on the shore, and when it was daylight, we arose and wandered in the island to the right and left until we saw a building in the distance. We walked toward that building and kept walking until we stood at its door. While we stood there, out came a

group of naked men, who, without speaking to us, seized us and took us to their king. He ordered us to sit, and we sat. Then they brought us some strange food, the like of which we had never seen in our lives. My stomach revolted from it, and unlike my companions, I refrained from eating it, and my refraining was, by the favor of the Almighty God, the cause of my being alive till now. For when my companions ate of that food, they were dazed and began to eat like madmen, and their states changed. Then the people brought them coconut oil, and gave them to drink from it and anointed them with it. When they drank of that oil, their eyes rolled in their heads, and they proceeded to devour an unusual amount of food. When I saw them in that condition, I was puzzled and felt sorry for them, and I became extremely anxious and fearful for myself from these naked men. I looked at them carefully and realized that they were Magians and that the king of their city was a demon. Whenever someone came to their country, or they spotted him or chanced to meet him in the valley or on the roads, they brought him to their king, gave him of that food to eat and anointed him with that oil, so that his belly would expand and he would overeat, feeling stupefied, losing judgment, and becoming like an idiot. Then they gave him more and more of that food to eat and of that oil to drink, and when he became fat and stocky, they slaughtered him, roasted him, and gave him to their king to eat, while they themselves ate the flesh without roasting it or cooking it.

When I realized the situation, I was extremely anxious for myself and my companions, who, in their stupefaction, did not know what was being done to them. They were committed to a man who took them out every day and let them pasture on that island, like cattle. In the meantime, I wasted away and became emaciated from hunger and fear, and my skin shriveled on my bones. When the Magians saw me in this condition, they left me alone and forgot me, not one of them taking any notice of me, until one day I found a way to slip out of the building and walked away. Then I saw a herdsman sitting on something elevated in the middle of the sea, and when I looked at him, I realized that he was the man to whom they had committed my companions to be taken out to pasture. With him there were many men like them. As soon as the man saw me, he knew that I was in possession of my reason and that I was not afflicted like my companions. He signed to me from afar, saying, "Turn back, and take the road on your right, and it will lead you

into the king's highway." I turned back, as he had told me and, finding a road on my right, began to follow it, sometimes running from fear, sometimes walking slowly, in order to catch my breath, and I kept following the road until I disappeared from the sight of the man who had directed me to it, and we were no longer able to see each other.

By then, the sun had set, and it had become dark. I sat down to rest and tried to sleep, but I could not sleep that night because of my extreme fear, hunger, and fatigue. When the night was half spent, I rose and walked in the island until it was daylight, and the sun rose over the tops of the hills and over the plains. I was tired, hungry, and thirsty; so I ate of the herbs and the plants that were on that island until I had enough to allay my hunger. Then I walked the whole day and the next night, and whenever I felt hungry, I ate of the plants to stay my stomach, and I walked on like this for seven days and nights.

On the morning of the eighth day, I happened to cast a glance and saw a vague object in the distance. I walked toward it and kept walking until I reached it, after sunset. I stood scrutinizing it from a distance, still fearful because of what I had suffered the first and the second time, and found that it was a group of men gathering peppercorn. When I approached them, and they saw me, they hastened to me and, surrounding me on all sides, asked me, "Who are you, and from where do you come?" I said to them, "Fellows, I am a poor stranger," and I informed them of my case and how I had suffered hardships and horrors. When they heard my words, they said, "By God, this is extraordinary, but tell us how you escaped from these black men and how you slipped by them, when they are so numerous on this island, and they eat people?" So I related to them what had happened to me with them and how they had given my companions the food I refrained from eating. They congratulated me on my safety and marveled at my story.

They seated me among them until they finished their work. Then they brought me some good food, which I ate, being hungry, and rested for a while. Then they took me and embarked with me in a ship and went to their island and their homes. There, they presented me to their king, and I saluted him, and he welcomed me, treated me with respect, and asked me about my case. I related to him all that had happened to me, from the day I left Baghdad until I came to him, and he, as well as all those present in his assembly, marveled greatly at my

story. Then he asked me to sit and gave orders to bring the food, and I ate until I had enough, washed my hands, and offered thanks to the Almighty God and praised him for His favor. Then I left the presence of the king and went sightseeing in his city and found it flourishing, populous, and prosperous, abounding with food, markets, and buyers and sellers. I rejoiced in my arrival in that city and felt at ease there, as I made friends with its people who, together with their king, favored me and honored me more than even the chief men of that city.

I saw that all the men, great and small, rode fine horses, but without saddles, and wondered at that, so I said to the king, "My lord, why don't you ride on a saddle, for it offers the rider comfort and greater control?" He asked, "What kind of thing is a saddle, for I have never seen nor used one in all my life." I said to him, "Will you permit me to make you a saddle to ride on and experience its quality?" He said, "Very well." I said, "Let them fetch me some wood," and he gave orders to bring me everything I required. Then I asked for a skilled carpenter and sat with him and showed him the construction of the saddle and how to make it. Then I took some wool, carded it, and made a felt pad out of it. Then I brought leather and, covering the saddle with it, polished it and attached the straps and the girth. Afterwards, I brought a blacksmith and showed him how to make the stirrups, and he forged a great pair of stirrups which I filed and plated with tin and to which I attached fringes of silk. Then I brought one of the best of the king's horses, saddled him, attaching the stirrups to the saddle; bridled him; and led him to the king, who was pleased by the saddle and received it with approval and thanks. He seated himself on the saddle and was greatly pleased with it and gave me a large reward for it.

When his vizier saw that I had made the saddle, he asked me for one, and I made one like it. Moreover, all the leading men and high officials began to order saddles, and I kept making them and selling them, having taught the carpenter and blacksmith how to make saddles and stirrups. Thus I amassed a great deal of money, and was highly esteemed and greatly loved, and I continued to enjoy a high status with the king and his entourage, as well as the leading men of the city and the lords of the state.

One day, I sat with the king, in the utmost happiness and honor, when he said to me, "You are honored and loved among us, and you

have become one of us, and we cannot part from you, nor can we bear your departure from our city. I wish you to obey me in a certain matter, without contradicting me." I said to him, "What does your majesty desire of me, for I cannot deny you, since I am indebted to you for your favors, benefits, and kindness, and, praise be to God, I have become one of your servants." He said, "I wish to marry you among us to a lovely, elegant, and charming woman, a woman of beauty and wealth, and you shall reside with us and live with me in my palace. Therefore, do not deny me or argue with me." When I heard the king's words, I remained silent, for I was too embarrassed to say anything. He said, "Son, why don't you answer me?" I replied, "My lord and king of the age, the command is yours." So he immediately summoned the judge and the witnesses and married me to a fine lady of high rank, noble birth, great lineage, surpassing beauty, and abundant wealth, possessing a great many buildings and dwellings. Then he gave me a great, beautiful house, standing alone, and gave me servants and attendants, and assigned me stipends and supplies. So I lived in the utmost ease, contentment, and happiness and forgot all the weariness, trouble, and hardship I had suffered. I said to myself, "If I ever go back to my country, I will take her with me. But whatever is predestined to happen will happen, and no one knows what will befall him," for I loved her and she loved me very much, and we lived in harmony, enjoying great prosperity and happiness.

One day, God the Almighty caused the wife of my neighbor, who was one of my companions, to die, and I went to see him to offer my condolences for the loss of his wife and found him in a sorry plight, anxious, weary, and distracted. I offered my condolences and began to comfort him, saying, "Don't mourn for your wife. God the Almighty will compensate you with a better wife and will grant you a long life, if it be His will." He wept bitterly, saying, "O my friend, how will God compensate me with a better wife, when I have only one day to live?" I said, "Friend, be rational and do not prophecy your own death, for you are well and in good health." He said, "By your life, brother, tomorrow you will lose me and never in your life will you see me again." I asked, "How so?" He said, "Today, they will bury my wife and bury me with her in the tomb, for it is the custom of our country, when the wife dies, to bury the husband alive with her, and when the husband dies, to bury

the wife alive with him, in order that neither of them may enjoy life after the other.” I said to him, “By God, this is a most vile custom, and no one should endure it.”

While we were conversing, most of the people of the city came, offered their condolences for the death of my friend’s wife and his own death, and began to prepare her, according to their custom. They brought a coffin and, placing the woman in it, carried her and took her husband with them, outside the city, until they reached a place in the side of a mountain by the sea. They advanced to a spot and lifted from it a large stone, revealing a stone-lined well. They threw the woman down into that well, which seemed to lead into a vast cavern beneath the mountain. Then they brought the husband and, tying a rope of palm fibers under his armpits, let him down the well, with a jug of sweet water and seven loaves of bread. When he was down, he undid the rope, and they drew it up, covered the mouth of the well with that large stone as it was before, and went on their way, leaving my friend with his wife in the cavern. I said to myself, “By God, this death is worse than the first.” Then I went to the king and said to him, “O my lord, why do you bury the living with the dead in your country?” He replied, “It is the custom of our country, when the husband dies, to bury his wife alive with him, and when the wife dies, to bury her husband alive with her, so that they may always be together, in life and in death. This custom we have received from our forefathers.” I asked him, “O king of the age, will you do to a foreigner like me as you have done to that man, if his wife dies?” He replied, “Yes, we bury him and do to him as you have seen.” When I heard his words, I was galled, dismayed, stricken with grief for myself, and dazed with fear that my wife might die before me and they bury me alive with her. Then I tried to divert my mind, by keeping busy, and to console myself, thinking, “Maybe I will die before her, for no one knows who will go first and who will follow.”

But a short time later, my wife fell ill, and a few days later died. Most of the people of the city came to offer their condolences for her death to me and to her relatives. The king too came to offer his condolences, as was their custom. Then they brought a woman to wash her, and they washed her and arrayed her in her richest clothes and gold ornaments, necklaces, and jewels. Then they put her in the coffin and carried her to the side of the mountain and, removing the stone from

the mouth of the well, they threw her in. Then all my friends and my wife’s relatives turned to me to bid me the last farewell, while I was crying out among them, “I am a foreigner, and I cannot endure your custom.” They did not pay any attention to my words, but, seizing me, they bound me by force and let me down the well into the large cavern beneath the mountain, with seven loaves of bread and a jug of sweet water, as was their custom. Then they said to me, “Untie yourself from the ropes,” but I refused, and they threw the ropes down on me, covered the opening of the well, and departed.

I saw in that cavern many dead bodies that exhaled a putrid and loathsome smell, and I blamed myself for what I had done, saying to myself, “By God, I deserve everything that has happened to me.” I could not distinguish night from day, and I sustained myself with very little food, not eating until I felt the pangs of hunger, nor drinking until I became extremely thirsty, fearing that my food and water would be exhausted. I said to myself, “There is no power and no strength, save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent. What possessed me to marry in this city? Every time I say to myself that I have escaped one calamity, I fall into a worse one. By God, this death is a vile death. I wish that I had drowned in the sea or died on the mountain; that would have been better than this horrible death.” And I continued to blame myself. Then I threw myself down on the bones of the dead, begging, in the extremity of my despair, the Almighty God for a speedy death, but found it not, and I continued in this state until my stomach was lacerated by hunger, and my throat was inflamed with thirst. So I sat up and, groping for the bread, ate a little morsel and drank a mouthful of water. Then I stood up and began to explore that cavern. I found that it was wide and empty, except that its floor was covered with dead bodies and rotten bones from long ago. I made myself a place in the side of the cavern, far from the fresh bodies, and went to sleep there. Eventually my provisions dwindled until I had only a very little left. During each day, or more than a day, I had eaten only a morsel and drunk only a mouthful, fearing that the food and water would run out before my death.

I remained in this situation until one day, while I sat wondering what I would do when I ran out of food and water, the rock was suddenly removed from its place, and the light beamed on me. I said to myself, “I wonder what is happening,” and saw people standing at the opening of

the well who let down a dead man and a living woman, weeping and wailing for herself, and they let down with her food and water. I kept staring at the woman, without being seen by her, while they covered the mouth of the well with the stones and went on their way. Then I took the shinbone of a dead man and, going to the woman, struck her on the crown of the head, and she fell down unconscious. I struck her a second and a third time until she died. She had on her plenty of apparel, ornaments, necklaces, jewels, and precious metals, and I took all she had, together with the bread and water, and sat in the place I had made for myself in the side of the cavern where I used to sleep, and continued to eat only a little of that food, just enough to sustain me, for fear that it would be exhausted quickly and I would die of hunger and thirst.

I remained in the cavern for some time, and whenever they buried a dead person, I killed the living one who was buried with him and took his food and water to sustain myself until one day I woke up from my sleep and heard something rummaging in the side of the cavern. I said to myself, "What can it be?" Then I got up and, with a shinbone in my hand, I walked toward the noise and found out that it was a wild beast which, when it became aware of me, ran away and fled from me. I followed it to the far end of the cavern and saw a spot of light, like a star, now appearing, now disappearing. When I saw it, I walked toward it, and the closer I got to it, the larger and brighter it became until I was certain that it was an opening in the cavern leading to the open air. I said to myself, "There must be an explanation for this. Either it is a second opening, like the one from which they let me down, or it is a fissure in the rock." I stood reflecting for a while; then I advanced toward the light and found that it was a hole in the side of the mountain which the wild beasts had made and through which they entered the cavern and ate of the dead bodies until they had their fill and went out as they came.

When I saw the hole, I felt relieved from my anxiety and worry, certain of life, after having been on the verge of death, and as happy as if I had been in a dream. Then I tried until I succeeded to climb out of the hole, finding myself on the side of a great mountain overlooking the sea and acting as a barrier between the sea, on the one side, and the island and the city, on the other, so that none could come to that part from the city. I praised and thanked the Almighty God, feeling extremely

happy and regaining my courage. Then I returned through the hole to the cavern and brought out all the food and water I had saved. Then I changed my clothes, putting on some of the clothes of the dead, and gathered a great many of all kinds of necklaces of pearls and precious stones, ornaments of gold and silver set with gems, and other valuables I found on the corpses and, using the clothes of the dead to pack the jewelry in bundles, carried them out through the hole to the side of the mountain and stood on the seashore.

Every day I went into the cavern and explored it, and whenever they buried someone alive, I killed him, whether he was male or female, took his food and water and, coming out of the cavern, sat on the seashore to wait for deliverance by the Almighty God, by means of a passing ship. For some time, I kept gathering all the jewelry I could find, tying it up in bundles in the clothes of the dead, and carrying it out of the cavern.

One day, as I was sitting on the seashore, thinking about my situation, I saw a ship passing in the middle of a roaring, surging sea. I took a white shirt that I had taken from one of the dead, tied it to a stick, and ran along the seashore, making with it signals to the people on the ship, until, happening to glance in my direction, they saw me and turned toward me, and when they heard my cries, they sent a boat with a group of men. When they came close to me, they said,

"Who are you, and why are you sitting in this place, and how did you reach this mountain, for in all our lives we have never known anyone who has reached it?" I said, "I am a merchant, who had been shipwrecked, and I saved myself by getting on a wooden plank, together with my belongings, and, with God's help and by my own exertions, skill, and great toil, I landed at this place, with my belongings." They took me with them in the boat, carrying all I had taken from the cavern, bundled in the clothes and shrouds of the dead, embarked in the ship, and took me with all my belongings to the captain.

The captain said to me, "Fellow, how did you reach this great mountain, which bars the shore from the great city behind it, for I have been sailing in this sea and passing by this mountain all my life, but I have never seen anyone here, except the birds and the wild beasts?" I replied, "I was a merchant on a large ship that was wrecked, and I was thrown into the sea with all my merchandise, which consisted of the

fabrics and clothes that you see. But I placed them on one of the wide wooden planks of the ship, and fate and fortune aided me, and I landed on the mountain, where I have been waiting for someone to pass by and take me with him.” I did not tell them, however, about what had happened to me in the city or in the cavern, for fear that they might have with them on the ship someone from that city. Then I took out a good portion of my property and presented it to the captain, saying, “Sir, you are the cause of my rescue from this mountain. Take this gift in gratitude for what you have done.” But he refused my gift, saying, “We take nothing from anyone, and when we see a shipwrecked man on the seashore or on an island, we take him with us, feed him and give him to drink, and if he is naked, clothe him, and, when we reach a safe harbor treat him with kindness and charity and give him a present, for the sake of the Almighty God.” When I heard his words, I offered prayers, wishing him a long life.

We sailed from sea to sea and from island to island, while I anticipated my deliverance and rejoiced in my safety, but every time I recalled my stay with my dead wife in that cavern, I almost lost my mind. At last, with the help of the Almighty God, we arrived safely in Basra, where I stayed for a few days, then headed for Baghdad. There, I came to my quarter, entered my house, and met my relatives and friends, inquiring about their condition, and they rejoiced and congratulated me on my safe return. Then I stored all I had brought with me in my storerooms, gave alms and clothed the widows and the orphans, and bestowed gifts. I felt extremely joyful and happy and returned to my former habit of associating with friends and companions and indulging in sport and pleasure. These, then, are the most extraordinary events of my fourth voyage. Dine with me now, brother, and come back tomorrow, as usual, and I will tell you the story of what happened to me on the fifth voyage, for it is more extraordinary and more wonderful than the preceding one.

Then Sindbad the Sailor gave the porter a hundred pieces of gold and ordered that the table be spread, and after the guests dined, they went their way, in great amazement, for each story was more extraordinary than the preceding one. Sindbad the Porter went to his house, where he spent the night in the utmost joy, happiness, and wonder. As soon as it was daylight, he got up, performed his morning prayer,

and walked until he came to Sindbad the Sailor. He walked in, wished him good morning, and Sindbad welcomed him and asked him to sit with him until the rest of his companions arrived. They ate and drank, enjoyed themselves, and felt merry, and when they turned to conversation, Sindbad the Sailor began his story saying:

The Fifth Voyage of Sindbad

Friends, when I returned from the fourth voyage, I indulged in sport, pleasure, and delight, rejoicing greatly in my gains, profits, and benefits, and forgot all I had experienced and suffered until I began to think again of traveling to see foreign countries and islands. Having made my resolve, I bought valuable merchandise suited to a sea voyage, packed up my bales, and journeyed from Baghdad to Basra. I walked along the shore and saw a large, tall, and goodly ship, newly fitted. It pleased me and I bought it. Then I hired a captain and crew, over whom I set some of my slaves and pages as superintendents, and loaded my bales on the ship. Then a group of merchants joined me, loaded their bales on the ship, and paid me the freight. We set out in all joy and cheerfulness, rejoicing in the prospect of a safe and prosperous voyage, and sailed from sea to sea and from island to island, landing to see the sights of the islands and towns and to sell and buy.

We continued in this fashion until one day we came to a large uninhabited island, waste and desolate, except for a vast white dome. The merchants landed to look at the dome, which was in reality a huge Rukh's egg, but, not knowing what it was, they struck it with stones, and when they broke it, much fluid ran out of it, and the young Rukh appeared inside. They drew it out of the shell, slaughtered it, and took from it a great deal of meat. While this was going on, I was on the ship, uninformed and unaware of it until one of the passengers came to me and said, “Sir, go and look at that egg, which we thought to be a dome.” I went to look at the egg and arrived just when the merchants were striking it. I cried out to them, “Don't do this, for the Rukh will come, demolish our ship, and destroy us all.” But they did not heed my words.

While they were thus engaged, the sun suddenly disappeared, and the day grew dark, as if a dark cloud was passing above us. We raised our heads to see what had veiled the sun and saw that it was the

Rukh's wings that had blocked the sunlight and made the day dark, for when the Rukh came and saw its egg broken, it cried out at us, and its mate came, and they circled above the ship, shrieking with voices louder than thunder. I called out to the captain and the sailors, saying, "Push off the ship, and let us escape before we perish." The captain hurried and, as soon as the merchants embarked, unfastened the ship and sailed away from the island. When the Rukhs saw that we were on the open sea, they disappeared for a while.

We sailed, making speed, in the desire to leave their land behind and escape from them, but suddenly they caught up with us, each carrying in its talons a huge rock from a mountain. Then the male bird threw its rock on us, but the captain steered the ship aside, and the rock missed it by a little distance, and fell into the water with such force that we saw the bottom of the sea, and the ship went up and down, almost out of control. Then the female bird threw on us its rock, which was smaller than the first, but as it had been ordained, it fell on the stern of the ship, smashed it, sent the rudder flying in twenty pieces, and threw all the passengers into the sea.

I struggled for dear life to save myself until the Almighty God provided me with one of the wooden planks of the ship, to which I clung and, getting on it, began to paddle with my feet, while the wind and the waves helped me forward. The ship had sunk near an island in the middle of the sea, and fate cast me, according to God's will, on that island, where I landed, like a dead man, on my last breath from extreme hardship and fatigue and hunger and thirst. I threw myself on the seashore and lay for a while until I began to recover myself and feel better. Then I walked in the island and found that it was like one of the gardens of Paradise. Its trees were laden with fruits, its streams flowing, and its birds singing the glory of the Omnipotent, Everlasting One. There was an abundance of trees, fruits, and all kinds of flowers. So I ate of the fruits until I satisfied my hunger and drank of the streams until I quenched my thirst, and I thanked the Almighty God and praised Him.

I sat in the island until it was evening, and night approached, without seeing anyone or hearing any voice. I was still feeling almost dead from fatigue and fear; so I lay down and slept till the morning. Then I got up and walked among the trees until I came to a spring of

running water, beside which sat a comely old man clad with a waistcloth made of tree leaves. I said to myself, "Perhaps the old man has landed on the island, being one of those who have been shipwrecked." I drew near him and saluted him, and he returned my salutation with a sign but remained silent. I said to him, "Old man, why are you sitting here?" He moved his head mournfully and motioned with his hand, meaning to say, "Carry me on your shoulders, and take me to the other side of the stream." I said to myself, "I will do this old man a favor and transport him to the other side of the stream, for God may reward me for it." I went to him, carried him on my shoulders, and took him to the place to which he had pointed. I said to him, "Get down at your ease," but he did not get off my shoulders. Instead, he wrapped his legs around my neck, and when I saw that their hide was as black and rough as that of a buffalo, I was frightened and tried to throw him off. But he pressed his legs around my neck and choked my throat until I blacked out and fell unconscious to the ground, like a dead man. He raised his legs and beat me on the back and shoulders, causing me intense pain. I got up, feeling tired from the burden, and he kept riding on my shoulders and motioning me with his hand to take him among the trees to the best of the fruits, and whenever I disobeyed him, he gave me, with his feet, blows more painful than the blows of the whip. He continued to direct me with his hand to any place he wished to go, and I continued to take him to it until we made our way among the trees to the middle of the island. Whenever I loitered or went leisurely, he beat me, for he held me like a captive. He never got off my shoulders, day or night, urinating and defecating on me, and whenever he wished to sleep, he would wrap his legs around my neck and sleep a little, then arise and beat me, and I would get up quickly, unable to disobey him because of the severity of the pain I suffered from him. I continued with him in this condition, suffering from extreme exhaustion and blaming myself for having taken pity on him and carried him on my shoulders. I said to myself, "I have done this person a good deed, and it has turned evil to myself. By God, I will never do good to anyone, as long as I live," and I began to beg, at every turn and every step, the Almighty God for death, because of the severity of my fatigue and distress.

I continued in this situation for some time until one day I came with him to a place in the island where there was an abundance of

gourds, many of which were dry. I selected one that was large and dry, cut it at the neck and cleansed it. Then I went with it to a grapevine and filled it with the juice of the grapes. Then I plugged the gourd, placed in it the sun, and left it there several days until the juice turned into wine, from which I began to drink every day in order to find some relief from the exhausting burden of that obstinate devil, for I felt invigorated whenever I was intoxicated.

One day he saw me drinking and signed to me with his hand, meaning to say, "What is this?" I said to him, "This is an excellent drink that invigorates and delights." Then I ran with him and danced among the trees, clapping my hands and singing and enjoying myself, in the exhilaration of intoxication. When he saw me in that state, he motioned to me to give him the gourd, in order that he might drink from it. Being afraid of him, I gave it to him, and he drank all that was in it and threw it to the ground. Then he became enraptured and began to shake on my shoulders, and as he became extremely intoxicated and sank into torpor, all his limbs and muscles relaxed, and he began to sway back and forth on my shoulders. When I realized that he was drunk and that he was unconscious, I held his feet and loosened them from my neck and, stooping with him, I sat down and threw him to the ground, hardly believing that I had delivered myself from him. But, fearing that he might recover from his drunkenness and harm me, I took a huge stone from among the trees, came to him, struck him on the head as he lay asleep, mingling his flesh with his blood, and killed him. May God have no mercy on him!

Then I walked in the island, feeling relieved, until I came back to the spot on the seashore where I had been before. I remained there for some time, eating of the fruits of the island and drinking of its water and waiting for a ship to pass by, until one day, as I sat thinking about what had happened to me and reflecting on my situation, saying to myself, "I wonder whether God will preserve me and I will return to my country and be reunited with my relatives and friends," a ship suddenly approached from the middle of the roaring, raging sea and continued until it set anchor at the island, and its passengers landed. I walked toward them, and when they saw me, they all quickly hurried to me and gathered around me, inquiring about my situation and the reason for my coming to that island. I told them about my situation and what

had happened to me, and they were amazed and said, "The man who rode on your shoulders is called the Old Man of the Sea, and no one was ever beneath his limbs and escaped safely, except yourself. God be praised for your safety." Then they brought me some food, and I ate until I had enough, and they gave me some clothes, which I wore to make myself decent. Then they took me with them in the ship, and we journeyed many days and nights until fate drove us to a city of tall buildings, all of which overlooked the sea. This city is called the City of the Apes, and when night comes, the inhabitants come out of the gates overlooking the sea and, embarking in boats and ships, spend the night there, for fear that the apes may descend on them from the mountains.

I landed, and while I was enjoying the sights of the city, the ship sailed, without my knowledge. I regretted having disembarked in that city, remembering my companions and what had happened to us with the apes the first and the second time, and I sat down, weeping and mourning. Then one of the inhabitants came to me and said, "Sir, you seem to be a stranger in this place." I replied, "Yes, I am a poor stranger. I was in a ship that anchored here, and I landed to see the sights of the city, and when I went back, I could not find the ship." He said, "Come with us and get into the boat, for if you spend the night here, the apes will destroy you." I said, "I hear and obey," and I got up immediately and embarked with them in the boat, and they pushed it off from the shore until we were a mile away. We spent the night in the boat, and when it was morning, they returned to the city, landed, and each of them went to his business. Such has been their habit every night, and whoever remains behind in the city at night, the apes come and destroy him. During the day, the apes go outside the city and eat of the fruits in the orchards and sleep in the mountains until the evening, at which time they return to the city. This city is located in the farthest parts of the land of the blacks.

One of the strangest things I experienced in the inhabitants' treatment of me was as follows. One of those with whom I spent the night in the boat said to me, "Sir, you are a stranger here. Do you have any craft you can work at?" I replied, "No, by God, my friend, I have no trade and no handicraft, for I was a merchant, a man of property and wealth, and I owned a ship laden with abundant goods, but it was wrecked in the sea, and everything in it sank. I escaped from drowning

only by the grace of God, for He provided me with a plank of wood on which I floated and saved myself.” When he heard my words, he got up and brought me a cotton bag and said, “Take this bag, fill it with pebbles from the shore, and go with a group of the inhabitants, whom I will help you join and to whom I will commend you, and do as they do, and perhaps you will gain what will help you to return to your country.”

Then he took me with him until we came outside the city, where I picked small pebbles until the bag was filled. Soon a group of men emerged from the city, and he put me in their charge and commanded me to them, saying, “This man is a stranger. Take him with you and teach him how to pick, so that he may gain his living and God may reward you.” They said, “We hear and obey,” and they welcomed me and took me with them, and proceeded, each carrying a cotton bag like mine, filled with pebbles. We walked until we came to a spacious valley, full of trees so tall that no one could climb them. The valley was also full of apes, which, when they saw us, fled and climbed up into the trees. The men began to pelt the apes with the pebbles from the bags, and the apes began to pluck the fruits of those trees and to throw them at the men, and as I looked at the fruits the apes were throwing, I found that they were coconuts.

When I saw what the men were doing, I chose a huge tree full of apes and, advancing to it, began to pelt them, while they plucked the nuts and threw them at me. I began to collect the nuts as the men did, and before my bag was empty of pebbles I had collected plenty of nuts. When the men finished the work, they gathered together all the nuts, and each of them carried as many as he could, and we returned to the city, arriving before the end of the day. Then I went to my friend, who had helped me join the group, and gave him all the nuts I had gathered, thanking him for his kindness, but he said to me, “Take the nuts, sell them, and use the money.” Then he gave me a key to a room in his house, saying, “Keep there whatever is left of the nuts, and go out every day with the men, as you did today, and of what you bring with you separate the bad and sell them, and use the money, but keep the best in that room, so that you may gather enough to help you with your voyage.” I said to him, “May the Almighty God reward you,” and did as he told me, going out daily to gather pebbles, join the men, and do as they did, while they commended me to each other and guided me to the trees

bearing the most nuts. I continued in this manner for some time, during which I gathered a great store of excellent coconuts and sold a great many, making a good deal of money, with which I bought whatever I saw and liked. So I thrived and felt happy in that city.

One day, as I was standing on the seashore, a ship arrived, cast anchor, and landed a group of merchants, who proceeded to sell and buy and exchange goods for coconuts and other commodities. I went to my friend and told him about the ship that had arrived and said that I would like to return to my country. He said, “It is for you to decide.” So I thanked him for his kindness and bade him farewell. Then I went to the ship, met the captain, and, booking a passage, loaded my store of coconuts on the ship. We set out and continued to sail from sea to sea and from island to island, and at every island we landed, I sold and traded with coconuts until God compensated me with more than I had possessed before and lost.

Among other places we visited, we came to an island abounding in cinnamon and pepper. Some people told us that they had seen on every cluster of peppers a large leaf that shades it and protects it from the rain, and when the rain stops, the leaf flips over and assumes its place at its side. From that island I took with me a large quantity of pepper and cinnamon, in exchange for coconuts. Then we passed by the Island of the ‘Usrat, from which comes the Comorin aloewood, and by another island, which is a five-day journey in length and from which comes the Chinese aloewood, which is superior to the Comorin. But the inhabitants of this island are inferior to those of the first, both in their religion and in their way of life, for they are given to lewdness and wine drinking and know no prayer nor the call to prayer. Then we came to the island of the pearl fishers, where I gave the divers some coconuts and asked them to dive, and try my luck for me. They dived in the bay and brought up a great number of large and valuable pearls, saying, “O master, by God, you are very lucky,” and I took everything they brought up with me to the ship.

Then we sailed until we reached Basra, where I stayed for a few days, then headed for Baghdad. I came to my quarter, entered my house, and saluted my relatives and friends, and they congratulated me on my safety. Then I stored all the goods and gear I had brought with me, clothed the widows and the orphans, gave alms, and bestowed gifts on

my relatives, friends, and all those dear to me. God had given me fourfold what I had lost, and because of my gains and the great profit I had made, I forgot what had happened to me and the toil I had suffered, and resumed my association with my friends and companions. These then are the most extraordinary events of my fifth voyage. Let us have supper now, and tomorrow, come, and I will tell you the story of my sixth voyage, for it is more wonderful than this.

They spread the table, and the guests dined, and when they finished Sindbad gave the porter a hundred pieces of gold, which he took and went on his way, marveling at what he had heard. He spent the night in his house, and as soon as it was morning, he got up, performed his morning prayer, and went to the house of Sindbad the Sailor. He went in and wished him good morning and Sindbad the Sailor asked him to sit and talked to him until the rest of his friends arrived. They talked for a while, then the table was spread, and they ate and drank and enjoyed themselves and felt merry. Then Sindbad the Sailor began the story of the sixth voyage, saying:

The Sixth Voyage of Sindbad

Dear friends, after I returned from my fifth voyage, I forgot what I had suffered, indulging in sport, play, and merriment and leading a life of the utmost joy and happiness until one day a group of merchants came by, showing signs of travel. Their sight reminded me of the days of my return from my travel and my joy at seeing my country again and reuniting with my relatives and friends and dear ones. So I felt a longing for travel and trade, and I resolved to undertake another voyage. I bought valuable, rich merchandise suited to a sea voyage, packed it up in bales, and traveled from Baghdad to Basra. There, I found a large ship, full of prominent people and merchants with valuable goods, and I loaded my bales in the ship, and we departed from Basra peacefully.

We sailed from place to place and from city to city, selling and buying, seeing the sights of the different countries and enjoying our voyage and our good luck and profit. We continued in this way until one day the captain suddenly cried out, screaming, threw down his turban, slapped his face, plucked his beard, and fell down in the hold of the ship, in extreme anguish and grief. All the merchants and other

passengers gathered around him and asked, "Captain, what is the matter?" He said, "We have strayed from our course and entered a sea of which we don't know the routes. If God does not provide us with a means of escape from this sea, we will all perish. Pray to the Almighty God to save us from this predicament." Then he climbed the mast, in order to loosen the sails, but a strong wind blew against the ship, driving it backward, and the rudder broke, near a high mountain. The captain came down from the mast and said, "There is no power and no strength save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent, and no one can prevent that which has been decreed. By God, we have fallen into a great peril, from which there is no escape." The passengers wept for themselves and bade each other farewell, having given themselves up for lost. Soon the ship veered toward the mountain and smashed against it, so that its planks scattered, and all that was in it sank into the sea. The merchants fell into the sea, and some of them drowned, while others held onto the mountain and landed on it. I was among those who landed.

That mountain was on a large island whose shores were strewn with wrecked ships and an abundance of goods, gear, and wealth that dazzled the mind, cast there by the sea from the ships that had been destroyed and whose passengers had drowned. I climbed to the upper part of the island, began to explore, and saw a stream of sweet water that issued from one side of the mountain and entered from the other. Then all the other passengers climbed to the upper part and wandered in the island, like madmen, for their minds were confounded by the profusion of goods and wealth they saw strewn on the shores.

I saw in that stream a great many rubies and royal pearls and all kinds of jewels and precious stones, which covered the bed of the stream like gravel, so that all the channels, which ran through the fields, glittered from their profusion. I saw also in that island an abundance of the best Chinese as well as Comorin aloewood. Moreover, in that island there is a gushing spring of some sort of crude ambergris, which flows like wax under the intense heat of the sun, and flows in a stream down to the seashore, where the sea beasts come up, swallow it, and return with it into the sea. When it gets hot in their stomachs, they eject it from their mouths into the water, and it rises to the surface, where it congeals and changes its color. Then the waves throw it on the shore, and the travelers and merchants who know it take it and sell it. As for the crude ambergris

that is not swallowed, it flows over the side of that spring and congeals on the ground. When the sun rises, it flows, and its scent fills the whole valley with a musk-like fragrance, and when the sun sets, it congeals again. But that place where the ambergris is found, no one can reach, for the mountains surround the whole island, and no one can climb them.

We continued to wander in that island, marveling at the riches that the Almighty God had created there, but feeling perplexed in our predicament and sorely afraid. We had collected on the shore of the island a small amount of food, which we used sparingly, eating only every day or two, worried that the food would run out and we would die of starvation and fear. Whenever one of us died, we washed him, wrapped him in a shroud from the clothes cast on the shore by the sea, and buried him until most of us had died, except for a few who were weakened by a stomach ailment contracted from the sea. It was not long before all my friends and companions died, one by one.

I was left all alone in the island, with very little food. I wept for myself, thinking, "I wish that I had died before my companions, for they would have at least washed me and buried me. There is no power and no strength save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent." A little while later, I arose and dug for myself a deep hole on the shore, saying to myself, "When I grow weak and feel that I am about to die, I will lie in this grave and die in it, and the wind will blow the sand on me and cover me, and I will have my burial." I blamed myself for my lack of sense in leaving my country and city and traveling to foreign countries, after all I had suffered during the first, the second, the third, the fourth, and the fifth voyages, each marked by greater perils and horrors than the preceding one, each time hardly believing in my narrow escape. And I repented and renounced the sea and all travel in the sea, especially since I had no need of money, of which I had enough and, indeed, so much more that I could not spend or exhaust even half of it for the rest of my life.

After a while, however, I reflected and said to myself, "By God, the stream must have a beginning and an end, and it must lead to an inhabited part. The best plan will be to make a little raft, big enough to sit in, take it down, launch it on the stream, and drift with the current. If I find a way out, I will escape safely, the Almighty God permitting,

and if I don't, it is better to die in the stream than in this place," and I sighed for myself.

Then I got up and proceeded to gather pieces of Comorin and Chinese aloewood from the island and tied them together on the shore with the ropes of wrecked ships. Then I took from the ships planks of even size and fixed them firmly on the wood. In this way, I made me a raft, which was a little narrower in width than the width of the stream. Then I attached a piece of wood on each side, to serve as oars, and launched it on the stream. Then I took some of the jewels, precious stones, and pearls that were as large as gravel and some of the best crude, pure ambergris, as well as other goods, together with whatever was left of the food, loaded everything on the raft, and did what the poet said:

*If you suffer injustice, save yourself
And leave the house behind to mourn its builder.
Your country you'll replace by another,
But for yourself, you'll find no other self.
Nor be too fretful at the blows of fate,
For every misfortune begins and ends,
And he who in a certain place his death impends,
Will in no other place suffer that fate.
Nor for your mission trust another man,
For none is as loyal as you yourself.*

I drifted with the stream, wondering what would happen to me, until I came to the place where the stream entered beneath the mountain and took the raft with it. I found myself in intense darkness, and the raft bore me with the current through a narrow tunnel beneath the mountain, and the sides of the raft began to rub against the sides of the tunnel, and my head began to rub against the roof. I was unable to go back, and I blamed myself for what I had done to myself and said, "If this tunnel becomes any narrower, the raft will not pass through, and since it cannot go back, I will inevitably perish miserably here." I prostrated myself on the raft, because of the narrowness of the channel, and continued to drift, not knowing night from day, because of the darkness beneath the mountain, and feeling concerned for myself and terrified that I might perish. In this condition, I continued my course along the stream, which

sometimes widened and sometimes narrowed, until the intensity of the darkness and distress wearied me, and I fell asleep as I lay prostrate on the raft, which drifted, while I slept in utter oblivion.

When I awoke and opened my eyes, I found myself in the light, in the open air, and found the raft moored to an island, in the middle of a group of Indians and blacks. As soon as they saw me rise, they approached me and spoke to me in their language, but I did not understand what they said and kept thinking that I was still asleep and that this was a dream occasioned by my grief and distress. When they spoke to me, and I did not reply, not knowing their language, one of them came to me and said to me in Arabic, "Peace be on you, friend! Who are you, from where do you come, and what is the reason for your coming here? We are the owners of these lands and fields, which we came to irrigate, and we found you asleep on the raft. So we held it and moored it here, waiting for you to rise at your leisure. Tell us what is the reason for your coming here?" I said, "For God's sake, sir, bring me some food, for I am hungry. After that ask me what you wish." He hastened and got me food, and I ate my fill until I felt satisfied and relaxed, and my spirit revived. I praised the Almighty God and rejoiced in my escape from that stream and in my finding them. Then I told them my story from beginning to end and how I had suffered from the narrowness of that stream.

They talked among themselves, saying, "We must take him with us and present him to our king, so that he may tell him his story." Then they took me, together with the raft and all that was on it of goods, jewels, precious stones, and gold ornaments, presented me to their king, and acquainted him with what had happened. He saluted me, welcomed me, and inquired about my condition and what I had experienced. I told him my story from beginning to end, at which he marveled exceedingly and congratulated me on my safety. Then I fetched from the raft a large quantity of jewels, precious stones, ambergris, and aloewood and presented them to the king, who accepted them, treated me very courteously, and gave me lodging in his palace, where I stayed permanently. I associated with the best and most prominent people, who treated me with great respect. The visitors to that island came to me and questioned me about the affairs of my country, and I told them, and I, in turn, questioned them and was informed about the affairs in

their own country. One day the King himself questioned me about the conditions in my country and the way the caliph governs in Baghdad, and I told him about the caliph's just rule. The king marveled at that and said, "By God, the caliph's methods are wise and his ways praiseworthy, and you have made me love him. Therefore, I would like to prepare a present and send it with you to him." I said, "I hear and obey, my lord. I will convey the present to him and inform him that you are his sincere friend."

I continued to live with the king in great honor, consideration, and contentment for some time until one day, sitting in the king's palace, I heard that a group of people from the city had prepared for themselves a ship, with the intention of sailing to the environs of Basra. I said to myself, "I cannot do better than to travel with these people." I arose at once and, kissing the king's hand, informed him of my wish to travel with that group in the ship they had prepared, for I longed for my country and my family. The king said, "The decision is yours, yet if you wish to stay with us, we will be very glad, for we have enjoyed your company." I said, "By God, my lord, you have overwhelmed me with your kindness and your favors, but I long for my country and my family and friends." When he heard my reply, he summoned the merchants who had prepared the ship, commended me to them, paid my fare, and bestowed on me a great many gifts. He also entrusted me with a magnificent gift for the Caliph Harun al-Rashid in Baghdad. Then I bade the king, as well as my frequent companions, farewell and embarked with the merchants in the ship.

We sailed with a fair wind, committing ourselves to the care of the Almighty and Glorious God, and continued to travel from sea to sea and from island to island until, with the permission of the Almighty God, we reached Basra safely. I disembarked and spent a few days there to equip myself and pack up my goods. Then I headed for Baghdad, the Abode of Peace, and went to the Caliph Harun al-Rashid and conveyed the king's gift to him. Then I came to my quarter, entered my house, and stored my goods and gear. Soon my relatives and friends came to see me, and I bestowed gifts on all, and gave alms.

A little while later, the caliph summoned me and asked me the reason for the gift and from where it came. I said, "By God, O

Commander of the Faithful, I do not know the name of the city from which this gift came, nor do I know the way to it. When the ship I was in was wrecked, I landed on an island, where I made me a raft and launched it on a stream in the middle of that island.” Then I related to him what had happened to me on my journey and how I had escaped from the stream and reached that city safely. I also related to him what had happened to me in that city and explained the reason for the gift. The caliph marveled exceedingly, and he ordered the historians to record my story and deposit it in his library, so that whoever reads it might be edified by it, and he treated me very generously.

I resumed my former way of life in Baghdad and forgot all that I had experienced and suffered, living a life of sport, play, and pleasure. This, then, friends, is the story of my sixth voyage. Tomorrow, God the Almighty willing, I will tell you the story of my seventh voyage, for it is stranger and more wonderful than all the others.

Sindbad ordered that the table be spread, and the guests dined with him. Then Sindbad the Sailor gave Sindbad the Porter a hundred pieces of gold, and the porter took the money and went on his way, as did the rest of the company, all marveling exceedingly at that story. Sindbad the Porter spent the night at his house, and as soon as he performed his morning prayer, he went to the house of Sindbad the Sailor. Then the rest of the group began to arrive, and when they were all assembled, Sindbad the Sailor began to tell them the story of his seventh voyage, saying,

The Seventh Voyage of Sindbad

Fellows, after I returned from my sixth voyage, I resumed my former way of life and continued to lead a life of contentment and happiness, indulging day and night in play, diversion, and pleasure, having secured great gains and profits, until I began to long again to sail the seas, associate with fellow merchants, see foreign countries, and hear new things. I made my resolve and, packing up a quantity of precious goods suited to a sea voyage, carried them from Baghdad to Basra, where I found a ship ready to set sail, with a group of prominent merchants. I embarked with them, and we became friends, as we sailed with a fair wind in peace and good health until we passed by a city called the City

of China, and while we were in the utmost joy and happiness, talking among ourselves about travel and commerce, a violent head wind blew suddenly, and a heavy rain began to fall on us until we and our bales were drenched. So we covered the bales with felt and canvas, fearing that the goods would be spoiled by the rain, and began to pray and implore God the Almighty to deliver us from the peril we were in. Then the captain, girding his waist and tucking up his clothes, climbed up the mast and began to look to the right and left. Then he looked at the people in the ship and began to slap his face and pluck his beard. We asked him, “Captain, what is the matter?” And he said, “Implore the Almighty God for deliverance from the peril we are in, and weep for yourselves and bid each other farewell, for the wind has prevailed against us and driven us into the farthest of the seas of the world.” He then descended from the mast, opened a chest, and took out of it a cotton bag. Then he untied the bag, took out of it some dust, like ashes, wetted it with water, and, waiting a little, smelled it. Then he took out of the chest a small book and began to read in it. Then he said to us, “Passengers, in this book there is an amazing statement that whoever comes to this place will never leave it safely and will surely perish, for this region is called the Province of the Kings, and in it is the tomb of our Lord Solomon, the son of David (peace be on him), and there are huge, horrible-looking whales, and whenever a ship enters this region, one of them rises from the sea and swallows it with everything in it.”

When we heard the captain’s explanation, we were dumbfounded, and hardly had he finished his words when the ship suddenly began to rise out of the water and drop again, and we heard a great cry, like a peel of thunder, at which we were struck almost dead with terror, sure of our destruction. Suddenly we saw a whale heading for the boat, like a towering mountain, and we were terrified and wept bitterly for ourselves and prepared for death. We kept looking at that whale, marveling at its terrible shape, when suddenly another whale, the most huge and most terrible we had ever seen, approached us, and while we bade each other farewell and wept for ourselves, a third whale, even greater than the other two, approached, and we were stupefied and driven mad with terror. Then the three whales began to circle the ship, and the third whale lunged at the ship to swallow it, when suddenly a violent gust of wind blew, and the ship rose and fell on a massive reef,

breaking in pieces, and all the merchants and the other passengers and the bales sank in the sea.

I took off all my clothes, except for a shirt, and swam until I caught a plank of wood from the ship and hung on to it. Then I got on it and held on to it, while the wind and the waves toyed with me on the surface of the water, carrying me up and down. I was in the worst of plights, with fear and distress and hunger and thirst. I blamed myself for what I had done and for incurring more hardships, after a life of ease, and said to myself, "O Sindbad the Sailor, you don't learn, for every time you suffer hardships and weariness, yet you don't repent and renounce travel in the sea, and when you renounce, you lie to yourself. I deserve my plight, which had been decreed by God the Almighty to cure me of my greed, which is the root of all my suffering, for I have abundant wealth." I returned to my reason and said to myself, "In this voyage, I repent to the Almighty God with a sincere repentance, and I will never again embark on travel, nor mention it, nor even think of it, for the rest of my life." I continued to implore the Almighty God and to weep, recalling my former days of play and pleasure and cheer and contentment and happiness.

I continued in this condition for a whole day and a second, at the end of which I came to a large island abounding in trees and streams. I landed and ate of the fruits of those trees and drank of the waters of those streams until I felt refreshed and regained my strength and recovered my spirit. Then I walked in the island and found on the other side a great river of sweet water, running with a strong current, and I remembered the raft I had made last time and said to myself, "I must make me a raft like that one; perhaps I will get out of here. If I get out safely, I will have my wish and vow to the Almighty God to forswear travel, and if I perish, I will find rest from toil and misery."

Then I gathered many pieces of wood from the trees, which were of the finest sandalwood, the like of which does not exist anywhere else, although I did not know it at the time. Then I found a way to twist grasses and twigs into a kind of rope, with which I bound the raft, saying to myself, "If I escape safely, it will be by the grace of God." Then I got on the raft and proceeded along the river, leaving that part of the island behind. I lay on the raft for three days. I did not eat, but I drank from the water of the river, to quench my thirst, until I was giddy like a

young bird from extreme weariness, hunger, and fear.

At the end of this time, the raft brought me to a high mountain, beneath which ran the river. When I saw this, I was frightened, recalling what I had suffered from the narrowness of that other stream during my preceding voyage. I tried to stop the raft and get off on the side of the mountain, but the current overpowered me and drew the raft, with me on it, beneath the mountain. I was sure that I would perish and said, "There is no power and no strength save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent," but after a short distance, the raft emerged in a wide space, a great valley, through which the river roared with a noise like thunder and ran with a swiftness like that of the wind. I held on to the raft, for fear of falling, while the waves tossed it to the right and left in the middle of the river. The raft continued to descend with the current, along the valley, while I was unable to stop or steer it toward the bank, until it brought me to a large, well-built, and populous city. When the people saw me on the raft, descending in the middle of the river with the current, they cast a net and ropes on the raft and drew it ashore.

I fell among them like a dead man, from extreme hunger, lack of sleep, and fear. Soon there approached me from among the people a venerable old man, who welcomed me and threw over me an abundance of handsome clothes, which I put on to make myself decent. Then he took me to the bath and brought me refreshing cordials and sweet perfumes. After the bath, he took me to his house, and his family received me joyfully. Then he seated me in a pleasant place and prepared sumptuous food for me, and I ate my fill and thanked the Almighty God for my safety. Then his pages brought me hot water, with which I washed my hands, and his maids brought me silk towels, with which I dried them and wiped my mouth. Then he prepared for me a private apartment in a part of his house and charged his pages and maids to wait on me and fulfill my needs, and they served me attentively. I stayed in the guest apartment for three days, enjoying delicious food and drink and sweet scents, until my fear subsided, my energy returned, and I felt at ease.

On the fourth day, the old man came to me and said, "Son, we have enjoyed your company, and God be praised for your safety. Would you like now to go down with me to the bank of the river and sell your goods in the market? Perhaps with the money you get, you will buy

something with which to traffic.” I remained silent for a while, thinking to myself, “What goods do I have, and what does he mean?” He added, “Son, don’t worry and don’t think too much about it. Let us go to the market, and if we find anyone who will offer a price that will content you, I will receive the money for you, and if we don’t, I will keep them for you in my storerooms until the days of buying and selling arrive.” I thought about it and said to myself, “Let me do what he asks and see what these goods are.” Then I said to him, “Uncle, I hear and obey. I cannot contradict you in anything, for what you do has God’s blessing.” So I went with him to the market and found out that he had taken the raft apart and delivered the sandalwood, of which it was made, to the broker who was announcing it for sale. The merchants came and opened the bidding, and they increased their offers until the bidding stopped at one thousand dinars. Then the old man turned to me and said, “Listen, son, this is the price of your goods at the present time. Would you like to sell them at this price, or would you like to wait and let me keep them for you in my storerooms to sell them for a higher price at the right time?” I replied, “Sir, I leave it to you; do as you wish.” He said, “Son, will you sell me this wood for a hundred dinars above what the merchants have offered?” I said, “Yes, it is done.” Then he ordered his servants to carry the wood to his storerooms, and we returned to his house, where we sat, and he counted the money in payment for the wood and, fetching bags, put the money in them, locked them up with an iron lock, and gave me the key.

Some days later, the old man said to me, “Son, I would like to propose something to you, and I hope that you will comply.” I said, “What is it?” He replied, “Son, I am a very old man, and I am without a son, but I do have a daughter who is young and charming and endowed with great wealth and beauty. I would like to marry her to you, so that you may live with her here in our country. Then I will give you all I have, for I have become an old man, and you will take my place.” I remained silent, and he added, “Son, accept my proposal, for I wish you good. If you obey me, I will marry my daughter to you, and you will be as my son and will possess all I have. If you wish to travel to your country and engage in trade, no one will prevent you. This is your property, at your disposal, to do with it what you wish and choose.” I said to him, “By God, uncle, you have become as a father to me. I have

suffered many horrors that have rendered me bewildered and lacking in judgment. It is for you to decide as you wish.” Then he ordered his pages to bring the judge and witnesses, and when they came, he married me to his daughter, celebrating with a great entertainment and a great feast. When I went in to my wife, I found her extremely beautiful, with a graceful figure and a lovely gait, clad in rich apparel and covered with gold ornaments, necklaces, jewels, and precious stones, worth thousands of thousands of dinars and beyond the means of anyone. When I saw her, she pleased me, and we loved one another. I lived with her for some time, leading an extremely happy and joyful life. Soon her father died and was admitted to the mercy of God. We prepared him and buried him, and I took possession of all his property, and his servants became my servants to serve me at my bidding. Then the merchants appointed me to his office, for he was their chief, and that meant that none of them purchased anything without his knowledge and permission.

When I mingled with the people of the city, I noticed that they were transformed at the beginning of each month, in that they grew wings with which they flew to the upper region of the sky, and no one remained in the city except women and children. I said to myself, “When the first day of the month comes, I will ask some of them to carry me with them to where they go.” When the day came, and their colors and shapes changed, I went to one of them and said, “For God’s sake, carry me with you, so that I may divert myself and then return.” He said, “This is not possible,” but I pressed him until he granted me the favor. So I went with them, without telling any of my family or servants or friends, and he took me on his back and flew with me up into the air and kept flying upward until we were so high that I heard the angels glorifying God in the vault of heaven. I marveled at that and exclaimed, “Glory be to God, and His is the praise.”

Hardly had I finished my prayer when a fire came out of heaven and almost consumed us. They flew down and, dropping me on a high mountain, departed, feeling very angry with me, and left me alone. I blamed myself for what I had done and said to myself, “There is no power and no strength, save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent. Every time I escape from a calamity, I fall into a worse one.”

I sat on the mountain, not knowing where to go, when suddenly two young men passed by. They were like twin moons, each holding a

walking staff of red gold. I approached them and saluted them, and they returned my salutation. Then I asked them, "For God's sake, tell me who and what you are." They replied, "We are servants of the Almighty God," and, giving me a walking staff of gold, like the ones they had with them, went on their way and left me. I walked along the ridge of the mountain, leaning on the staff and wondering about the two young men, when suddenly a serpent emerged from beneath the mountain, with a man in its mouth, whom it had swallowed to his navel, while he was screaming and crying out, "Whoever delivers me, God will deliver him from every difficulty." I went close to the serpent and struck it on its head with the gold staff, and it threw the man from its mouth. Then he approached me and said, "Since you have saved me from this serpent, I will never leave you, and you have become my companion on this mountain."

Soon a group of people approached us, and when I looked, I saw among them the man who had carried me on his shoulders and flew up with me. I approached him and, speaking courteously to him, offered my apologies and said, "Friend, this is not the way friends treat friends." He replied, "It was you who almost destroyed us by glorifying God on my back." I said, "Excuse me, for I had no knowledge of this, and I will never utter another word again." Finally, he consented to take me with him, on condition that I would refrain from mentioning the name of God or glorifying Him on his back. Then he carried me and flew up with me, as he had done before, until he brought me to my house.

My wife met me, greeted me, and, congratulating me on my safety, said, "Beware of going out again or associating with those people, for they are brothers of the devils and do not worship God." I asked her, "But how did your father then get along with them?" She replied, "My father was not one of them, nor did he as they did. Now that he is dead, I think that you should sell all our possessions, buy goods with the money, and go back to your country and family, and I will go with you, for I have no reason to stay in this city, since both my father and mother are dead." So I sold my father-in-law's property, little by little, and waited to find someone who would go to Baghdad, so that I might go with him.

Soon, a group of men in the city decided to travel and, failing

to find a ship, bought wood and built for themselves a large one. I booked passage with them, paying them the fare in full, and embarked with my wife and all we could carry of our property, leaving our land and buildings behind. We set out and sailed with a fair wind from sea to sea and from island to island until we reached Basra, where, without tarrying, I booked passage on a boat and, loading our belongings, headed for Baghdad. Then I came to my quarter, entered my house, and met my family and friends and loved ones, and stored in my storerooms all the goods I had brought with me. My family had given up hope of my return, for when they calculated the time of my absence during the seventh voyage, they found that it was twenty-seven years. When I related to them all my experiences, they marveled exceedingly and congratulated me on my safety.

Then I vowed to the Almighty God never to travel again by land or sea, after the seventh voyage, which was the one to end all voyages. I also refrained from indulging my appetites and thanked the Almighty and Glorious God and praised Him and glorified Him for having brought me back to my native country and to my family. Consider, o Sindbad the Porter, what I had gone through.

Sindbad the Porter said to Sindbad the Sailor, "For God's sake, pardon me the wrong I did you," and they continued to enjoy their fellowship and friendship, in all cheer and joy, until there came to them death, the destroyer of delights, sunderer of companies, wrecker of palaces, and builder of tombs.