

Arabian Nights Adventures

# The Merchant & the Jinni



Retold by  
Kelley Townley



Illustrated by  
Anja Gram



## Arabian Nights Adventures

Many moons ago a great king sentenced his innocent wife to death, but every night she tells the king a story, leaving the tale unfinished until the next night so that the king would spare her life to hear the ending. This lasted for one thousand and one Arabian nights, until the king finally released her. This is just one of those tales ...





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*Arabian Nights Adventures*

*The  
Merchant  
& the Jinni*

Kelley Townley  
Illustrated by Anja Gram



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# The Merchant & the Jinni



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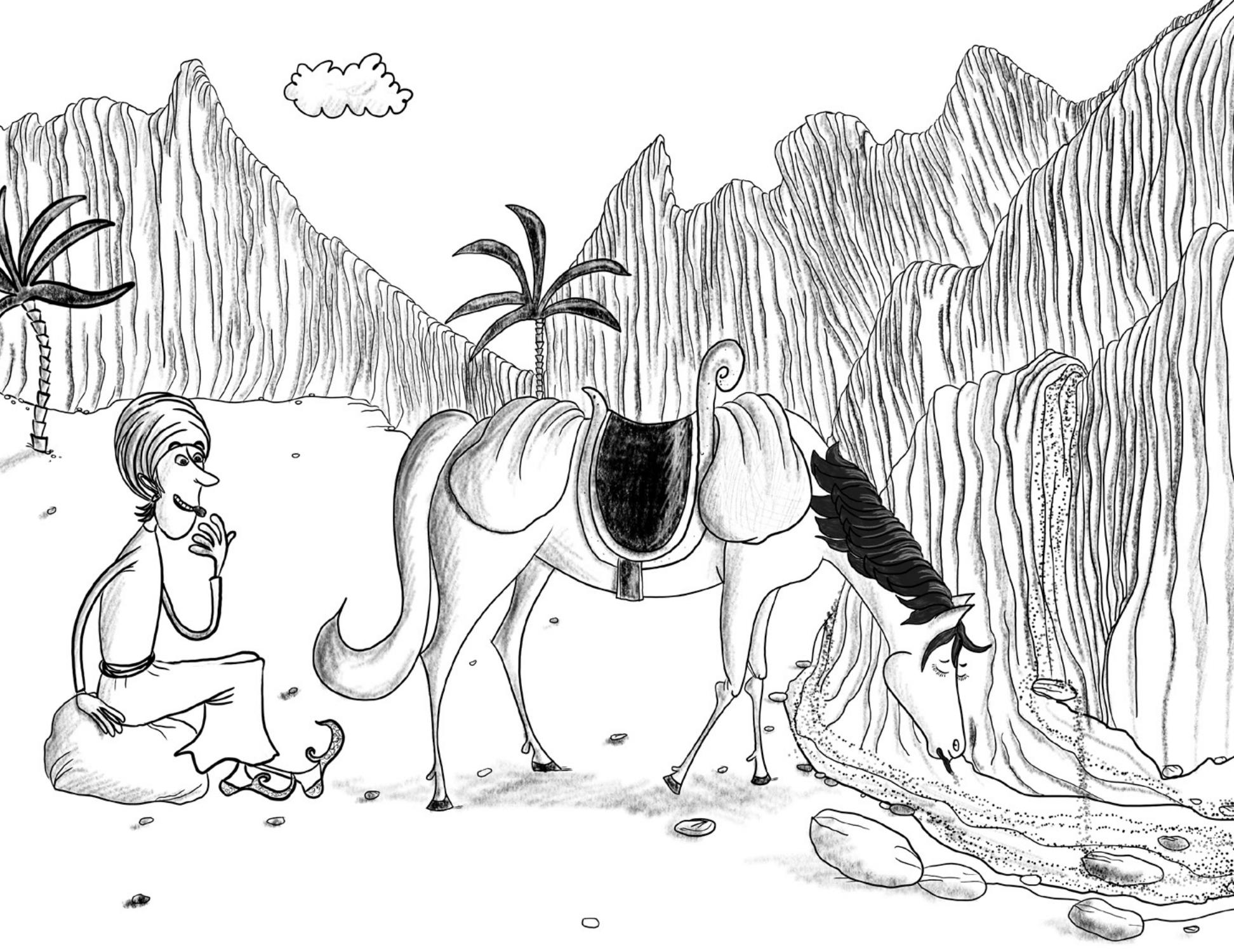
## *The Merchant and the Jinni*

There once lived a merchant called Massoud. He was as good a man as any and had a loving family who worked with him in his business of buying spices, carpets and lamps to resell at a profit. Sometimes Massoud would go travelling to meet suppliers or buyers from far away. He quite enjoyed

this part of his job and would joyfully pack a lunch of bread and dates to enjoy on the way.

One day he was due to see his supplier of nutmeg and he mounted his horse and waved his family goodbye. He had a good trip but on the way home he became lost. The heat of the

sun was so great that he turned from the path to seek shelter at a small oasis. Here a few trees surrounded a cool spring of fresh, clean water and Massoud delighted in its beauty. He ate his bread and started on the dates. When he had finished eating each delicious fruit he tossed the seed over



his shoulder without a further thought. At the end of his meal he stood up to return to his horse.

No sooner had he got to his feet, however, than the ground began to tremble. A crack appeared and out of the broken land rose dark, spiralling smoke. Massoud backed away in fear

as a great *jinni* formed before him. It was an ancient jinni with curling black horns, a wiry beard and dark purple skin stretched across a bare chest filled with strong muscles. The demonic beast loomed over Massoud and unsheathed two giant scimitar swords with blades that curved and broadened



out before narrowing to a point. The jinni glared at the merchant with such hatred that Massoud fell to his knees in fear.

‘O great Genie,’ cried Massoud.  
‘Whatever have I done to displease you?  
Know that I would never do anything  
to upset you on purpose.’

‘How dare you even talk to me,  
mortal, after thou hast slain my son!’

‘No, no,’ said Massoud. ‘I haven’t  
done this terrible deed. I do not even  
know your son!’

The jinni’s eyes flashed with anger.  
‘Did thou not sit under this tree and  
throw date stones behind you?’

Massoud cowered. 'I ... I did do that, yes.'

'Then thou hast killed my son, for one did strike him in the eye and kill him!' roared the jinni.

Massoud trembled and bowed his forehead to the ground.

'Great Genie, I am so sorry. I would

never have done this if I had known. I cannot bring back your son but I beg forgiveness for my carelessness. I have a family of my own.'

'I have no mercy for the killer of my son!' declared the jinni, and he raised the swords high in the air, ready to bring down the blades on poor

Massoud's neck.

'Wait!' cried Massoud. 'I see that there is no way I can stop you, but please will you at least grant me some time? I would return to my family and tell them what has happened for they will never know otherwise. Will you allow me this?'

'Ha!' said the jinni. 'If I grant you this request you will never come back.'

'I give you my word of honour and promise on the life of my own son that I will return so that you can kill me,' begged Massoud.

The jinni appeared to think about it. It did seem cruel to leave the man's family

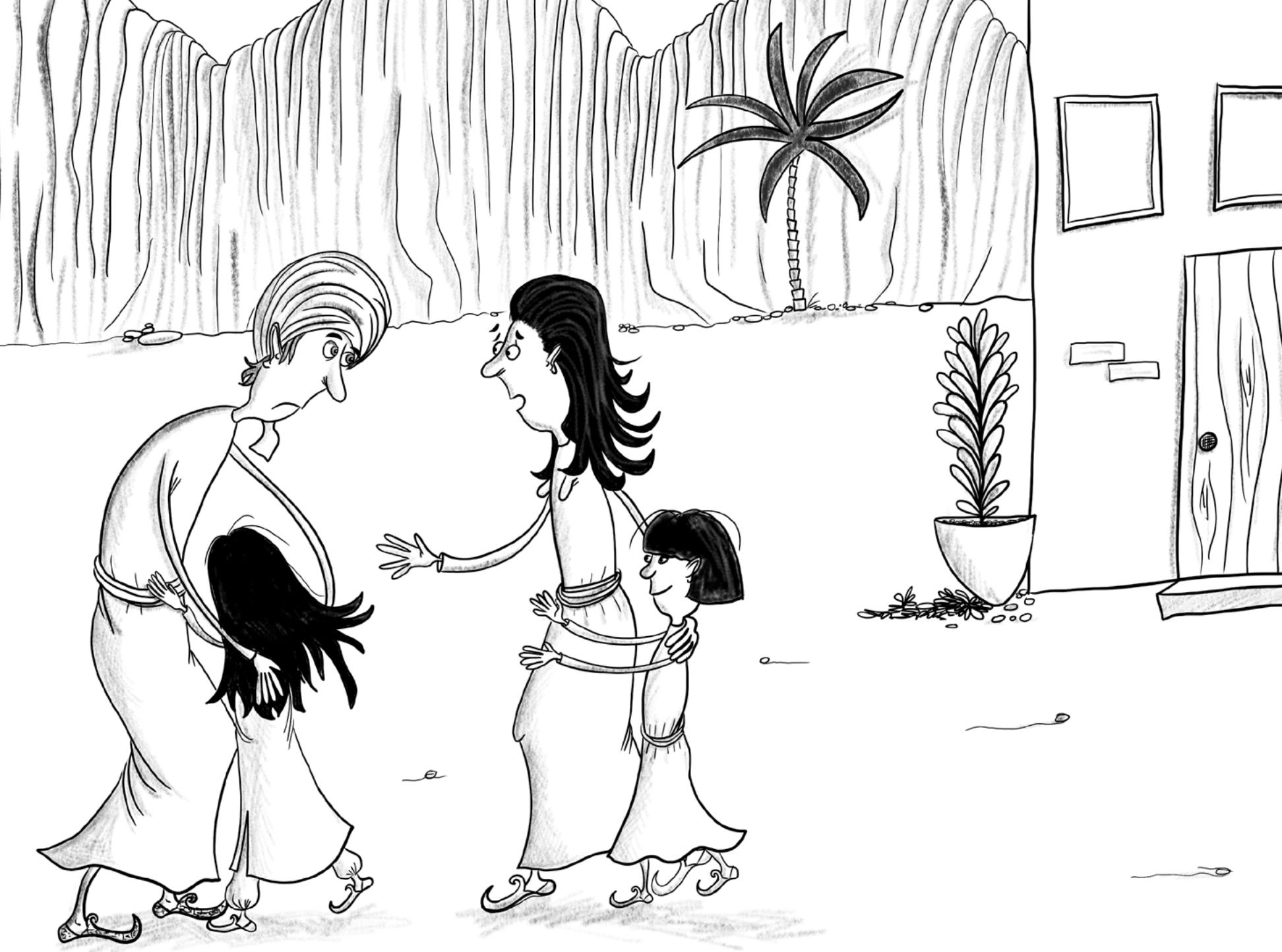
wondering what had happened to him.

‘How long do you require?’ asked the jinni.

‘A month should suffice to get my affairs in order,’ said Massoud sadly. ‘I promise you that when the moon is once again at its fullest I shall return here and wait for you under these trees.’

The jinni then nodded and disappeared back into smoke.

Massoud let out a shaky breath. He had survived for today but not for long. When he returned home his wife and children came out to greet him, but when they saw his pale, drawn face they knew something terrible had happened.





He told them about his promise to the jinni and they all wept with sadness. The whole family made sure that they spent every moment of that month together, but when the time had passed they all knew that Massoud had to honour his word and return to the oasis to meet his death at the hands of the

vengeful jinni.

So it was that when the moon was once again full, Massoud rode back to the oasis and, with a heavy heart, sat beneath the trees to await the return of the jinni in a state of terrible suspense.

The jinni did not come straightaway, but instead another man appeared, an

old farmer with a beautiful deer on a leash.

‘Ho there,’ said the old man. ‘May I sit with you and get some water?’

‘Of course,’ said Massoud, happy to have some distraction. ‘What a fine hind you have with you.’

‘Yes, indeed,’ he smiled. ‘She is a

delightful beast but prone to bad temper.’

And, as if prompted, the deer butted the old man with her head before bending down with her graceful neck to sample the water.

The old man sat down. ‘May I ask you, brother, what brings you to wait



in this deserted place, for I have heard there are many evil jinn about? It is a dangerous place to stop too long.'

'Alas, your warning comes too late,' said Massoud, and he told the old man about the vengeful jinni who was coming to kill him because he had accidentally caused the death of his son.

'That is astonishing,' said the man. 'I would very much like to witness your meeting with the jinni. Would you object?'

Massoud shrugged. At least it would be nice to have some company and not die alone.

Not long after this another figure

appeared on the horizon. Massoud's heart thudded in anticipation but again it was not the jinni but rather another traveller.

'Greetings, good sirs,' said the man. 'Would you mind if we joined you?'

The man had with him two black dogs, but instead of being interested

and playful, like most dogs are, these two canines looked sad and lacklustre.

'You and your dogs are welcome,' said Massoud, although he was beginning to feel a bit crowded.

The man with the dogs settled down and drank his fill before speaking.

'Might I ask what causes you both to



linger here in such a place of malignant magic?’

‘I am waiting to see this man meet with a jinni,’ said the farmer with enthusiasm, and Massoud sunk a little lower to the ground.

‘That should be worth waiting for,’ said the man with the dogs. ‘Would you

permit me to stay also?’

Massoud shrugged. He was beginning to wish the jinni would hurry up.

While the two men happily chatted away, a third figure appeared. Again Massoud felt the icy fingers of dread clutch at his heart, but this time it was a woman and her donkey.



‘Good evening to you gentlemen,’ she said. ‘May we join you and quench our thirst?’

‘Of course,’ said the old man, and then added, ‘We are waiting to see this man meet with a jinni who plans to kill him in revenge for the death of his son.’

Massoud looked at the man with

surprise. He wished he’d never let the old codger sit with him now!

‘That sounds truly amazing,’ said the woman as she and her donkey drank from the spring. ‘I should like to stay and see this also.’

Massoud frowned and crossed his arms. His death was not going the way

he had imagined at all!

And so for many hours the farmer and his deer, the man and his two black dogs, the woman and her donkey, and Massoud all sat and waited for the jinni to arrive.

Finally the ground began to tremble and crack until dark grey smoke

spiralled up into the shape of the mighty jinni. He hovered before them all in his brooding glory.

‘You have proved yourself honourable for returning to meet your death,’ he said to Massoud. ‘Now rise and let it be done.’

With a resigned air Massoud got to

his feet and approached the jinni with grim determination. He stretched his neck out as much as it would go so that the fearsome jinni might slice his head off with one mighty blow and be finished quickly.

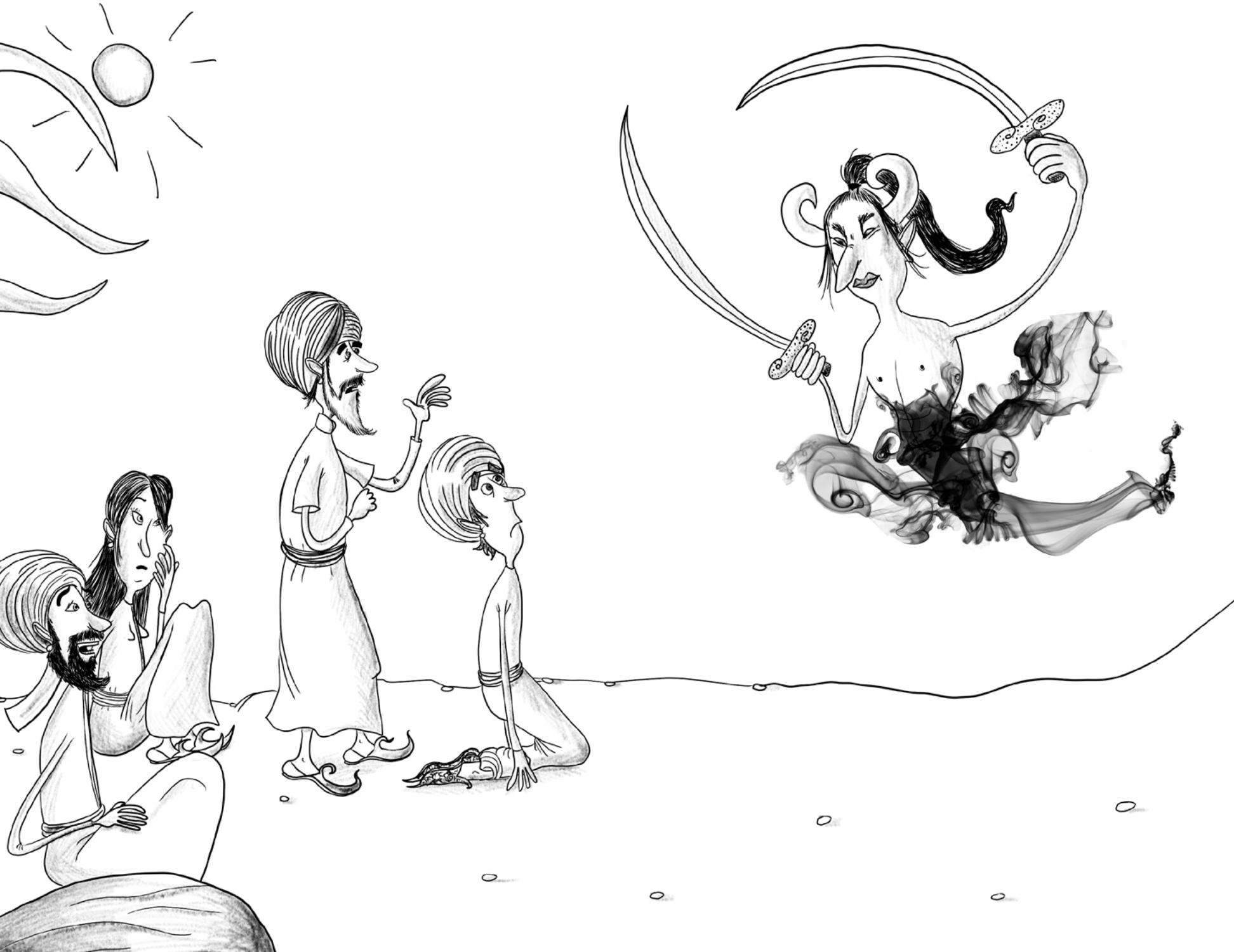
It was then that the old farmer got to his feet and coughed for attention. The jinni seemed to notice him for the

first time.

‘What is it you want, old man?’ asked the jinni.

‘I should like to offer you something, great Genie,’ said the farmer. ‘A story before you kill this man.’

Now jinn are just like ordinary people when it comes to stories, and this jinni was intrigued.



‘I am not in a hurry,’ said the jinni,  
and Massoud sighed in exasperation. ‘I  
will hear your story, old man.’

And the jinni lowered his swords so  
that he could hover comfortably with  
his great arms crossed over his massive  
bare chest to hear the tale.

## About this series

The Arabian Nights tales are some of the most enduringly entertaining stories ever written. Compiled in Arabic during the Islamic Golden Age, numerous tales depict legends, sorcery and magic intermingled with real people, places and events. Some tales are framed within other tales while others are perfectly self-contained. The result is a superb collection of richly layered narratives; whether adventure, historical, tragic, comic or romantic, they have delighted audiences for centuries.

Arabian Nights Adventures is a wonderful collection of children's books that brings this rich heritage to life. Instead of a vast compendium of stories, each book in the series is devoted to a single tale from The Nights. The best tales have been selected. There are traditional favourites such as *Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp*, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* and *The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor*, and less well-known gems such as *Gulnare of the Sea*, *The Enchanted Horse*, *The Merchant and the Jinni* and more.

Kelley Townley provides masterful contemporary renderings of these ancient treasures while Anja Gram's illustrations are full of the spice, wit and magic of the stories themselves. The series style is

fresh and vibrant and the print inside is clear and beautifully typeset. When placed on bookshelves the distinctive spines reveal a wonderful image that grows as new stories are added: a design made specially for one thousand and one nights' tales! And with the highest of editorial standards and attention to detail, this series will delight readers everywhere and bring the Islamic Golden Age gloriously to life.

## About Kelley Townley

Kelley Townley trained as a teacher and gained her MA in creative writing with distinction from Bath Spa University. She may be found either writing children's stories – happily losing herself in the dream world of the human imagination – or plotting new ways to engage readers, which are the same things really. Kelley lives near Bath with her family, the writer's obligatory cats and an ever growing number of woodlice.

## About Anja Gram

Anja Gram has illustrated numerous children's books and magazines. Her highly distinctive style captivates and endears readers around the world. She lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark.

# Arabian Nights Adventures

*Kelley Townley  
Illustrated by Anja Gram*

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# Arabian Nights Adventures



A merchant named Massoud mounts his horse one day to go and visit his supplier of nutmeg. Exhausted from the heat of the sun, he turns from the path to seek shelter at a small oasis. Unknown to Massoud, however, this tranquil spot is in fact a place of malignant magic, inhabited by a malevolent jinni. Before long the demonic beast appears carrying two giant scimitar swords and accuses poor Massoud of having committed a terrible crime ... for which he is to be severely punished. Can poor Massoud escape this awful fate? *The Merchant and the Jinni* is a collection of tales of dark magic, fear and vengeance, over which only the power of forgiveness can triumph.



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