

Arabian Nights Adventures

# Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp



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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# Contents

<i>Chapter 1 ★ A Stranger Visits</i>	9
<i>Chapter 2 ★ The Wonderful Lamp</i>	47
<i>Chapter 3 ★ The Sultan's Daughter</i>	61
<i>Chapter 4 ★ The Sorcerer Returns</i>	105
<i>Chapter 5 ★ The Roc's Egg</i>	133



## Chapter 1 A Stranger Visits

Once upon a time a remarkable thing happened in a faraway place called Cathay. In one tiny house in the crowded slums of the city lived a boy called Aladdin. Aladdin's family was very poor, but this was more due to bad luck than anything else. Every single day Aladdin's mother and father worked tirelessly to make clothes to sell to the market traders of the city, but still they had very little money.

Aladdin was only young yet his father constantly asked him to join in and help. But Aladdin would not help

– the work looked boring and it didn't even seem worth it for the small number of copper coins they got for their efforts. He'd much rather go and play in the streets with his friends.

‘But you must learn a trade,’ his father would say crossly. ‘How else will you earn a living when you are a man?’

‘What is the point of working so hard for so little?’ Aladdin would say in reply. ‘That is no life. No one else works as hard as you and mother do for as little money. I don't want to live like that.’

This grieved Aladdin's father immensely. He was a good and honest man and believed in the value of hard work, but it was true that a great many

people worked a lot less hard and earned more money. It simply wasn't fair.

And so it was, every day Aladdin's parents toiled from morning until dusk while Aladdin went out into the streets to play with the other children and explore all the interesting things there were to see in such a vibrant city. He never worked and whenever he was hungry he would just steal a loaf of bread or a fresh apple from the heavily laden stalls of the merchants. They all had so much they never noticed the odd missing item. Aladdin just had to be very careful not to get caught; to be caught was to have your hand cut off! Such was the punishment for stealing put in place by the city's great sultan.

In this way the poor people of the city remained poor and hungry and the wealthy people remained rich and well fed.

Unfortunately more bad luck came to Aladdin's family – or maybe it was another consequence of working so much. Aladdin's father got sick and died. Aladdin was still only a boy and his mother fell into even deeper despair.

'Will you help now with all the work?' she begged her son.

'Not likely,' replied Aladdin. 'For now I would have to do twice as much work for the same amount of money! That is no life; not for me and not for you either. Don't worry, Mother; we will amount to better one day!'

And at this Aladdin left once again to explore the city.

Many moons had gone by in this manner when one day a stranger arrived in the city. Aladdin had just invented a new game for his friends to play and was now half watching them mess up the rules and half watching a shiny green beetle climb the wall when he saw him there. The stranger. He appeared to be an African man with dark skin and foreign clothes. He stood in the shadows and watched the children play until at last he watched Aladdin more than any of the others. As the day came to a close and the golden sun turned a bright orange across the sky, the man approached Aladdin.

'Who are you, boy?' asked the man. Aladdin saw that the man was well dressed in fine fabric and carried a heavy purse at his waist.

'I am Aladdin,' he replied, eyeing that purse.

'Who is your father?' asked the man.

'My father was Mustapha the tailor.'

'Was?' asked the man.

'Sadly he is dead now,' explained Aladdin.

'That is very sad to hear,' said the man, but Aladdin did not think he looked that upset. 'I once knew your father and I thought you might be his son when I saw his likeness in your face. Here, take this gold coin, you

look like you might need it.'

Aladdin was more than happy to take the man's coin. He took the gold and ran away home.



'Look, Mother!' he cried, coming into the house. 'I have here more money than you earn in one month! And I did no work for it!'

His tired and weary mother came over to inspect the coin.

'Wherever did you get it?' she asked in wonder. 'You didn't steal it, did you?'

Aladdin put his hand on his heart. 'I swear that I did not steal it. A man gave it to me.'

'And what did he want in return?' his mother asked suspiciously.

'Nothing,' said Aladdin. 'He said he knew my father and was sorry to hear of his death.'

His mother nodded. 'A kindness then. We shall eat well this week.'

She smiled.

It was only the next day when Aladdin again saw the strange man.

'Hello, Aladdin,' said the man.

'It would please me greatly to call upon your mother and give her my sympathies on the loss of my dear friend, Mustapha. Can you tell me where you live?'

Aladdin wasn't so sure about this. It didn't seem right to tell a stranger where you lived, but even as these thoughts floated through his head Aladdin saw the man dip into his heavy purse and pull out two gold coins.

'Give these to your mother and tell her to prepare a wonderful meal for us all to share this evening.'

Aladdin took the money, told the man where he lived and ran to show his mother.

She was all panicked when she heard and spent the rest of the day cleaning and shopping and preparing the best feast she could in her humble home.

With great excitement she waited for the man's arrival.

‘Maybe our luck is about to change.’ She smiled and it was the first time Aladdin had seen her smile for a long time.

Soon the well-dressed stranger arrived and swept into their home.

‘I am so sad to see that you have fallen on hard times,’ the man told Aladdin’s mother as he held and stroked her hand.

The man stayed for a great many hours. He paid every compliment to Aladdin’s mother and made sure Aladdin was included in their conversations as well. But there was something odd about the man that Aladdin did not like. Aladdin may have been lazy but he was not slow-witted and not without a little cunning, and he saw these same characteristics in the man before him.

‘How did you know my father?’ Aladdin asked.

‘We were firm friends before he met your mother,’ the man declared.

‘But my father and mother met when they were very young,’ frowned Aladdin. ‘Yes, we were children together,’ declared the man.

‘It is funny,’ said Aladdin’s mother. ‘He never mentioned you.’

‘Ah,’ sighed the man. ‘It is true we parted on a disagreement. He was angry with me and I was angry with him. I cannot even remember what it was about now. Something foolish that children think is important no doubt.’

‘I sometimes think that what children find important is often more valuable than what adults think is important,’ mused Aladdin.

The man raised his cup to him: ‘Which is why I wish to make amends and help my old friend’s family, in need of some good fortune.’

Aladdin’s mother fairly swooned with gratitude but Aladdin was not so sure.

‘Do you have a trade, boy?’ the man asked Aladdin.

At this Aladdin’s cheeks coloured in embarrassment for as we know he had avoided all work before.

‘Alas, we tried to teach him how to sew,’ wailed his mother. ‘But he refused to learn!’

The man looked at Aladdin and then around at the shabby room.

‘It’s true that it does not seem a very worthwhile profession,’ he said.

‘Instead why not let me teach Aladdin the trade of a merchant. I will show him the skills of buying and selling, and together we will set up a shop for him so that he is able to support his mother and she’ll no longer need to work!’

Aladdin's mother was now completely besotted with the man. She poured him more wine and served him dish after dish until his every need was satisfied.

'I will come back for the boy first thing tomorrow morning,' said the man as he bowed and left them for the night.

'Oh Aladdin!' she cried as soon as the man was gone. 'We are truly blessed!'

Aladdin bit his lip. He was not sure he trusted that man at all. And he certainly didn't believe his story about knowing his father.

'Oh dear,' said his mother upon seeing his expression. 'What is wrong? Do you not like the man? I suppose you must not go with him if you don't

want to,' she said sadly.

At this Aladdin knew he simply must go. His poor mother who worked so hard was still ready to sacrifice this one chance of betterment for her son's happiness. It was high time he did something for her. Even if he didn't like the man he could still learn a good trade and who knows, maybe being a merchant would be fun after all?

So early the next morning Aladdin washed and dressed in his best clothes, which weren't much better than his worst clothes, and waited. As the sun rose above the city rooftops and the sky turned pink with promise the man appeared.

'Are you ready, Aladdin, to change the path of your future?' he asked.

With a prickle of excitement Aladdin declared that he was indeed ready and decided that, come what may, this would definitely be an adventure worth having.

Together they spent the day walking amongst the market stalls talking about which prices were cheap and which prices were expensive. And even if the man did make him feel uncomfortable at times he did buy Aladdin a great many things and by the end of the day Aladdin's cheeks hurt with the smile he wore and his arms were laden with pretty goods.

'Time for us to relax,' said the man and he took Aladdin to the public baths where people went to bathe – for this was a time when people rarely

had their own bathrooms. Aladdin had never been to the baths before. It cost money to enter and when you barely have enough money for food you never wasted any on smelling nice.

Oh, how spoiled Aladdin felt as his body sank into the warm water and the man ordered food and wine to be brought to them as they bathed. The life of a merchant was much better than the life of a poor tailor he concluded. Aladdin returned home that evening full of joy.

'Today was wonderful,' Aladdin told his mother. 'From now on everything will be different!'

And it was. But not for the better. The next day when the man came to collect him, they didn't walk amongst

the market stalls or go anywhere near the baths. Instead the man walked Aladdin towards the city gates. Aladdin thought that maybe they were going to see the foreign traders who stopped to sell their goods as they passed by, but they didn't.

The man just kept on walking. They walked and walked and walked until Aladdin was near exhaustion and yet still they walked.

'Wherever are we going?' complained Aladdin.

'Somewhere very special,' smiled the man.

And so Aladdin kept following. They walked until the sun began to dip and Aladdin thought his legs might simply give up.

'Ah, here we are,' said the man at last.

Aladdin looked around in confusion. They were nowhere. Completely isolated, surrounded by trees and rocks. He slumped to the ground.

'How will we get back to the city before dark?' he asked.

'Don't worry about that now,' said the man. 'Fetch us some firewood and I will show you something awe-inspiring!'

Aladdin grumbled as he went about collecting wood; being a merchant was beginning to be no fun at all. After a while the man had a good fire going and they ate a small meal. The man then dug deep into his pocket and withdrew a strange parcel. He

unwrapped it to reveal some blue powder and Aladdin looked on in wonder. The man then began to get quite strange, chanting words and sprinkling the powder onto the fire which suddenly sparked and changed colour, first to red and then green!

Aladdin leaped to his feet.

‘You are a sorcerer!’ he cried and tried to run away, but the man was much bigger and quicker than the boy and he caught him and cuffed him around the head.

‘Calm yourself,’ said the sorcerer irritably. ‘And I will show you wonders you could never imagine!’

Aladdin stared as the very ground before them opened up like the mouth of a great cave. In a mixture of

amazement and fear he watched as a large brass ring the size of his face appeared on the floor of the cave.

‘Now it is time for you to repay me all the kindness I have shown you,’ said the sorcerer. ‘You must grab that ring and pull with all your might!’

Aladdin looked at the brass ring set into the floor. It was ridiculous to think he could move something so big and heavy and he told the man so.

‘Idiot boy!’ snapped the sorcerer, cuffing him around the head again. ‘Do not ask questions! Just do as you are told! You want to be rich, don’t you?’

Aladdin nodded.

‘You don’t want to have to work hard like your mother and father, do you?’

Aladdin shook his head.

‘Then simply do all that I ask and don’t question me!’

And so, not wanting another cuff around the ear, Aladdin stepped forward and grabbed the ring.

‘Aren’t you going to help me?’ he asked.

The sorcerer’s eyes flashed with impatience. ‘Just pull it!’

Aladdin gave the brass ring a tug. He was sure it would have no effect but as soon as he touched it a section of the floor easily lifted to reveal a set of stone steps that led down into a never-ending darkness.

The sorcerer leaned forward with excitement. ‘At long last,’ he sighed, delighted.

He turned to Aladdin. ‘Your job is

to go down these steps and retrieve something for me. Make sure you touch nothing else. When you have returned to the surface and given me what I want you can go back down and take anything you wish. But first you must do as I say – get me the lamp.’

‘The lamp?’ asked Aladdin dubiously.

‘Yes, the lamp. An oil lamp,’ the sorcerer said. ‘All I desire is the lamp. It should be hanging in an alcove. Simply walk through the rooms until you reach the alcove. Be careful to touch nothing else! Bring me the lamp and then you may return to claim anything you like.’

‘But what is down there to take?’ asked Aladdin, looking down into the dark with trepidation. ‘I might not like it.’

‘Treasure!’ said the sorcerer. ‘Lots and lots of treasure. Gold. Jewels. Fine fabrics. Whatever your heart desires! And all of it can be yours after you’ve brought me the lamp.’

Aladdin bit his lip. This didn’t seem right. And it was very dark down those steps.

‘What if I don’t want to?’ he asked, and the sorcerer flew into a sudden rage.

He hit Aladdin about the head and screeched at him. ‘I have come all this way! I have been nice to you and given you many things, and now it is your turn to be nice to me! And what other choice do you have, boy? We are far from home and you do not know the way back! Now, go down those steps!’

Aladdin began to tremble. He knew

without doubt that he did not want to go down those steps. The man saw his reluctance and boiled with rage. He stomped around the clearing, kicking things and cursing loudly.

‘The boy must go down of his own accord,’ muttered the sorcerer under his breath. ‘I cannot make him do it or the spell will not work!’

Aladdin backed away in alarm.

Then the sorcerer tried a different approach. With great effort he stood still and with shaking hands smoothed back his wild hair.

‘Dearest boy, I apologise if I frightened you. It is just that this is very important to me. I have waited a long time to get this lamp and I grow impatient. Here, take this ring ...’

From his hand the sorcerer took a gold ring set with a dark red stone in the centre and held it out to Aladdin.

‘You have seen my power,’ he said. ‘Know that this ring is magic and will help you.’

Aladdin took the magic ring and it made him feel a little better.

‘Okay, I will get your lamp,’ said Aladdin. ‘If only so we can return home again soon.’

The sorcerer nodded eagerly.

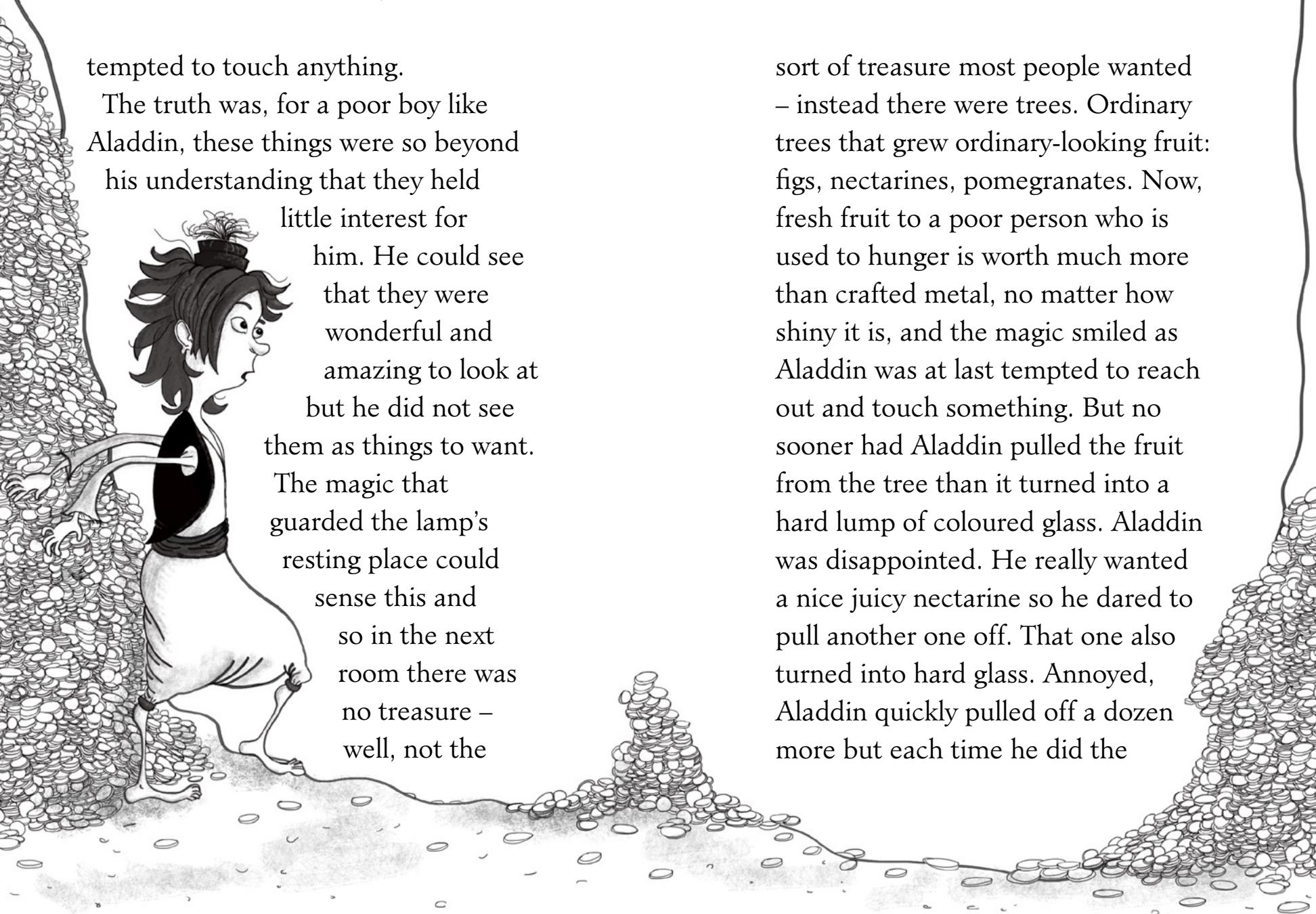
And so Aladdin very gingerly started down the steps. He had to be very brave as the darkness swallowed him up but as he passed through the pitch black everything around him changed and soon he found himself inside a great vast cave filled with the reflected

light of a trillion gold coins!

There were so many coins that they made great big mountains of gold that you could climb up and slide down. They sparkled and rose all around in a grand spectacle of wealth but Aladdin did not stop. Instead he kept walking until he entered the next room. This room was filled with even greater treasure, not just gold coins but jewel-encrusted goblets and fur-lined cloaks. Still Aladdin was not tempted to touch anything. The next room dazzled him even further as he saw precious gemstones laid in spectacular sword hilts and giant thrones intricately carved with mythical beasts with teeth inlaid with shiny white mother-of-pearl. And yet still Aladdin was not

tempted to touch anything.

The truth was, for a poor boy like Aladdin, these things were so beyond his understanding that they held



little interest for him. He could see that they were wonderful and amazing to look at but he did not see them as things to want.

The magic that guarded the lamp's resting place could sense this and so in the next room there was no treasure – well, not the

sort of treasure most people wanted – instead there were trees. Ordinary trees that grew ordinary-looking fruit: figs, nectarines, pomegranates. Now, fresh fruit to a poor person who is used to hunger is worth much more than crafted metal, no matter how shiny it is, and the magic smiled as Aladdin was at last tempted to reach out and touch something. But no sooner had Aladdin pulled the fruit from the tree than it turned into a hard lump of coloured glass. Aladdin was disappointed. He really wanted a nice juicy nectarine so he dared to pull another one off. That one also turned into hard glass. Annoyed, Aladdin quickly pulled off a dozen more but each time he did the

fruit turned into coloured glass. And so finally he kicked them all carelessly into the dirt.

A breeze blew and he directed his gaze to a nearby alcove where something dim and grimy hung. Peering closer, Aladdin saw that it was the oil lamp. He scratched his head in wonder. What did the old fool want with such an ugly thing? Still, it was his job to get it so he did. Climbing up the wall he reached up and unhooked it. It was a curious thing. Brass underneath the dirt with a curved handle and a long elegant spout. Nothing special, no gold or gemstones. Eager to get home Aladdin jumped down and started back.

He paused by the glass fruit on the

floor and decided to pick them up and take them with him, thinking at least his friends might like to play with them.

Aladdin hurried through the other rooms and back towards the steps, but as he climbed up, something seemed to pull him making it harder and harder. The more he struggled against the effort, the more difficult the climb became. Feeling scared, he called for the sorcerer to help him.

‘Where are you?’ came the reply. ‘I can’t see you.’

Aladdin could see the section of darkness that he had come through on the way in.

‘In the dark!’ he cried. ‘Help me out!’  
‘What’s wrong?’ called the sorcerer.

'Why can't you get back through by yourself? You didn't touch anything, did you?'

Aladdin stayed quiet. In his haste to return he'd forgotten not to touch anything and now the glass fruits were weighing him down. He quickly started emptying them out.

'I forgot!' he yelled back.

Suddenly the sorcerer's hand came groping through the darkness.

'Idiot boy!' he yelled. 'Pass me the lamp and I will help you out!'

Aladdin looked at the lamp in his arms. What was so special about the lamp that the sorcerer wanted none of the treasure but only the lamp? And what was to stop the sorcerer just leaving him here once he handed

him the lamp? No, he did not trust the man at all.

'Help me out and I will give you the lamp,' he replied fiercely.

The walls around him began to rumble.

'Quick!' the sorcerer cried. 'The cave is closing! You must give me the lamp!'

'I will give you the lamp when I am safely out!' declared Aladdin.

The walls were now beginning to move and change. The sorcerer's arm became frantic.

'The lamp!' he cried. 'Give me the lamp!'

'You said I could have whatever I wanted after I gave you the lamp, but when you take something from

the cave it closes!' yelled Aladdin.  
'You lied to me!'

'Just give me the lamp and I will give you anything you want!' the sorcerer cried desperately.

Aladdin now realised that everything the sorcerer had told him had been a lie just to get the lamp. There would be no new life as a merchant, no fine shop stacked full with wonderful goods, nothing at all, not for him or his mother; and as soon as he stepped out of the cave the man was sure to kill him. As the cave entrance shrank and shrank Aladdin sank to his knees and began to cry. He had been a fool, blinded by empty promises, and now all was lost. The sorcerer continued to shout at him and offered him

everything under the sun if only Aladdin would pass him the lamp. But Aladdin wouldn't do it. The cave entrance continued to shrink until it finally closed completely leaving only a solid wall of rock.

Outside the cave the sorcerer watched in horror as the magic dissolved. He beat the barren ground with his fists and cried out in rage and frustration. To come so close and yet still leave without the lamp was a crushing defeat. It was many, many hours later before he could admit that no one would ever get the lamp now and that he must gather the energy to begin his long journey back to Africa empty-handed.

Inside the magical cave Aladdin

wept with fear and despair as the magical glow of the trillion gold coins made his tears sparkle. Little use was all this wealth to someone trapped underground. Poor Aladdin curled into a ball and cried himself into a fitful sleep.

When he awoke he couldn't tell if it was night or day. He was used to feeling hungry but now he was also desperately thirsty. He played idly with the glass fruit and the lamp in his lap and wondered what to do. Surely he would die here. With a trembling lip he hugged himself and wished with all his might that he was back at home in his own bed.

To his utter astonishment Aladdin found himself being lifted up and transported through a hole in the

ground and back out into the open air. He recognised the rocky ground and the ashes where the fire had been. A force swept him across a barren landscape. He looked down and soon he spotted the gates of the city and the caravans of the merchant traders, then the baths and the markets that he knew so well. A little while longer and indeed Aladdin was back inside his very own house! He had to touch the walls to see if they were real. Yes they were! He was sitting upon his bed with the lamp and glass fruits still in his lap. Then Aladdin remembered the magic ring the man had given him.

'You saved me!' he cried, and kissed the ring that he still wore upon his finger.

## 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.

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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.

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*Kelley Townley  
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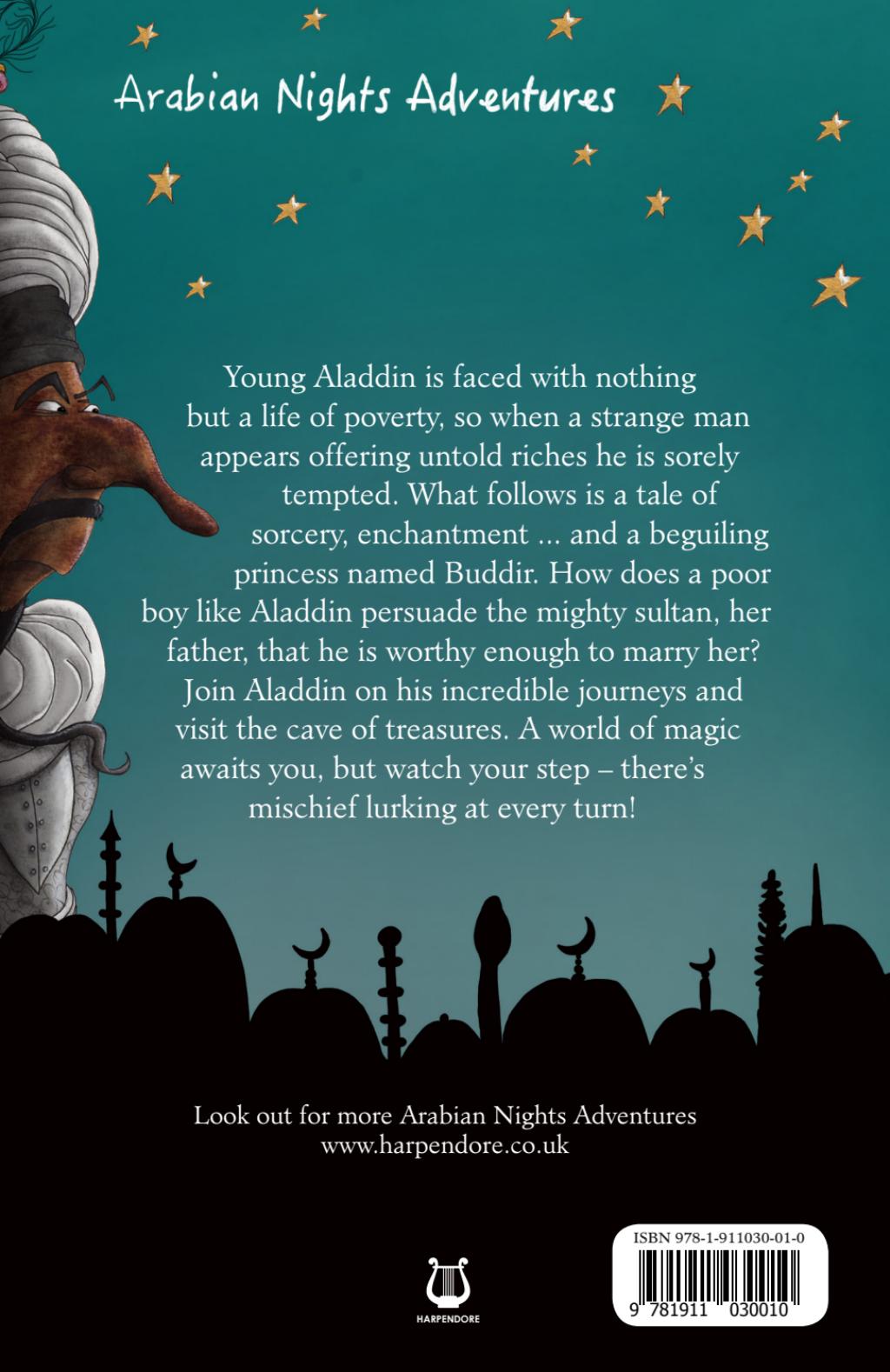
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Young Aladdin is faced with nothing but a life of poverty, so when a strange man appears offering untold riches he is sorely tempted. What follows is a tale of sorcery, enchantment ... and a beguiling princess named Buddir. How does a poor boy like Aladdin persuade the mighty sultan, her father, that he is worthy enough to marry her? Join Aladdin on his incredible journeys and visit the cave of treasures. A world of magic awaits you, but watch your step – there's mischief lurking at every turn!

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