

Arabian Nights Adventures

# The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor



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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The Fisherman and the Jinni

The King's Jester

*Arabian Nights Adventures*

The Seven  
Voyages  
of Sinbad  
the Sailor

Kelley Townley  
Illustrated by Anja Gram



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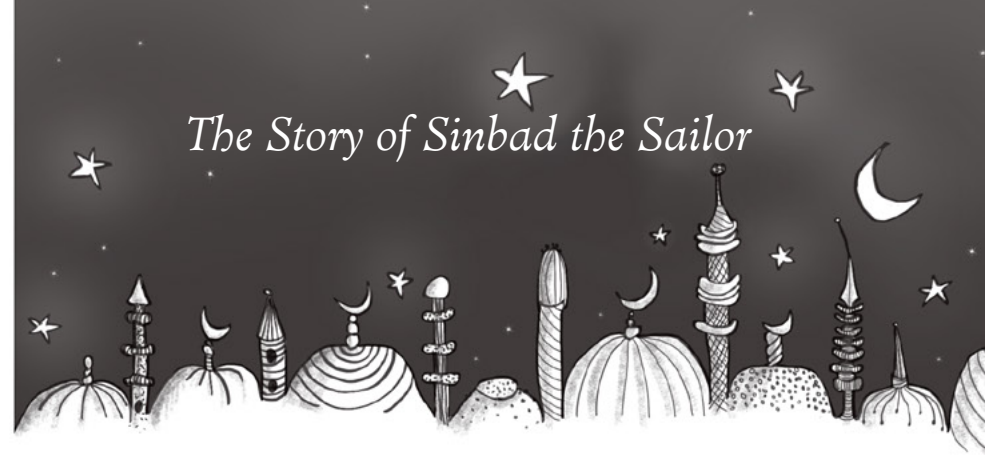
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# The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor



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Once upon a time, in the great city of Baghdad, there walked a porter with a heavy load on his back. He was a very poor man who earned his living by carrying things from one end of the city to the other.

Today was very hot and his load was very heavy. He huffed and puffed as best he could but halfway through his long journey he had to stop and rest. The porter slumped against the wall of a particularly grand house where the scent of aloe and jasmine wafted and the pavement was sprinkled with rose

water. As he wiped his weary brow on his dirty clothes he could hear laughter and merriment coming from within. A little peek through the window filled him with awe and jealousy. A group of fine people in rich clothes were sharing a large meal without a care in the world, while he slaved away in the burning sun carrying this heavy load for a pitiful number of coins.

‘How unfair and cruel the world is,’ he cried, ‘when one is so rich and the other so poor! Curse the man who lives here, who enjoys a life of ease and plenty while I can’t even afford to feed my family!’

‘I’m sorry you feel that way,’ said a voice.

The porter looked up in horror to see

someone looking down at him through the window. He was a finely dressed older gentleman with a neatly trimmed white beard and was most likely the owner of this house.

The porter was afraid.

‘I’m so sorry,’ he grovelled. ‘I meant no offence. I merely lost my temper because I am so thirsty and tired. Please forgive me.’

‘There is nothing to forgive,’ smiled the man. ‘Please, come inside and have some food and drink with us.’

The poor man shook his head.

‘Oh no, I couldn’t possibly. It wouldn’t be proper.’

‘I’m not really one to follow the rules,’ said the man. ‘My name is Sinbad and it would honour me greatly

if you came into my home.'

The porter didn't know what to say, and the next thing he knew Sinbad was coming out of his front door to steer him inside.

'My load ...' the porter said nervously. 'I must deliver it.'

I will ask two of my servants to do it for you,' said Sinbad with a confident smile. 'Today you are my guest.'

Inside, the other guests greeted the porter warmly despite how obviously shabby he was. Sinbad himself poured the porter a large drink, and then sat him to his right at the head of the table. Food was passed his way and, with a belly tight from so many years of hunger, the man fell upon the feast with nervous delight.

Sinbad patted him on the shoulder.

'My friend, I am glad that it was my house you rested by today, for I know it can seem unfair when you look at such good fortune and see your own hardships. But I want you to know that I have truly earned this position. You see, I was once like you, without a penny to my name, but I sailed the seven seas and had adventures you wouldn't believe, experiences you couldn't imagine. And now I use the wealth I gathered to make the world a better place for all.'

'I am very sorry to have judged you so harshly,' the porter said humbly. 'It was silly of me to assume something about someone I know nothing about.'

'Would you like to get to know me?'



*The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor*

asked Sinbad with a grin. 'Would you like to hear of my adventures?'

A great cheer went up from around the table as the other guests agreed with the idea.

'Yes, let's hear them all,' cried one of the guests, grabbing the wine bottle to share out in preparation.

'Not again,' moaned another guest, but he too poured himself a drink and settled back into his cushions.

And so these are the tales of the seven voyages of Sinbad the Sailor ...



*The First Voyage  
The Curious Island*

When I was a young man my parents left me a sum of money. Instead of saving the money and spending it wisely, however, I spent it all on fine living and frivolous things that soon disappeared. Quite soon I realised I had no money left at all, and no future prospects. I needed to find work, but in my foolish youth I had learned no skills. No one would give me a job.

In the end I had to sell what I had left – my house, my furniture, my fine clothes – and use the money to sail

aboard a merchant's ship with the intention of buying and selling my way into a new fortune. Oh, did I give the other merchants a good laugh when I swaggered across the deck with my distinctive red turban around my head, only to be violently seasick for the first few days, and then discover my freshly bought supplies had gone rotten, and that my herd of goats were all male and so wouldn't breed or give milk!

I could have got angry and vengeful at my bad luck, but instead I decided to try harder. I listened to the advice of the other traders and watched how they worked until I finally began to make money instead of lose it. We had a jolly time then, sailing around the Persian Gulf, going from port to port,

buying and selling, trading our goods. I really began to love the open water and the fresh salt air.

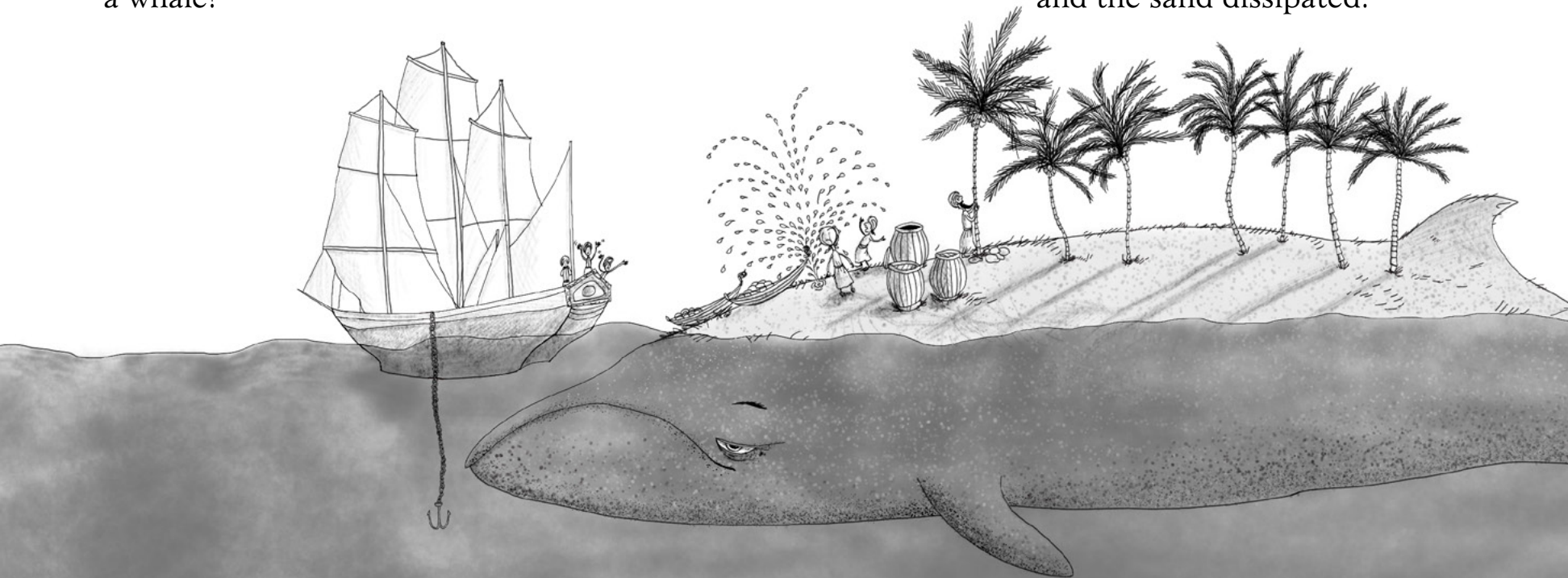
The better we all did the further we dared to travel until one day, in uncharted waters, we came across a curious island. It seemed to be floating freely, a small oasis of tufty sea-grass and young palm trees. With the scent of adventure and the hope of fresh water some of the sailors and I went ashore. It was a curious place which seemed to rumble beneath our feet as we explored. We collected cocoa nuts and filled several barrels with drinking water from a pool at its centre. It was while here that we found out exactly what we had got ourselves into. Suddenly a huge jet of water spurted

out of the pool and shot into the air. It rained down on us as we stared up in surprise. And then the island began to sink. The very ground was disappearing into the water.

Out at sea we looked at the ship where our friends were waving at us in panic.

‘That’s no island,’ they cried. ‘It’s a whale!’

True enough, it seemed the island was no bit of land but an actual creature that we had disturbed with our feet and now was diving back into the depths of the ocean! We all scrambled for the row boat but every step got us wetter and wetter until there was no more solid ground. The island was gone, the trees uprooted and the sand dissipated.



We swam for the little boat only to see the great tail of the beast, four men wide, rise up high out of the water and smash back down as it dived. It hit the row boat and splintered it into a dozen pieces. The resulting wave knocked us all about in the water and I had to grab an empty barrel just to stay afloat. The current quickly pulled me away from my friends. Soon they were just a speck on the horizon and I felt sure my time had come as I struggled for a whole day and a whole night, alone on the open water. Luck was with me, however, as when I awoke from an exhausted sleep I found myself on dry land.

The sand here was coarse and unfamiliar, suggesting a strange land

that I had never seen before. The surrounding cliffs were high and rugged, but by pulling myself up onto exposed tree roots I was able to climb out and escape the cove.

With no sign of the ship or my friends, I realised I must find help myself, and set off to find some people. The rugged coastline quickly turned into a dry, dusty scrubland and I began to worry I had made a mistake. There were no people out here, and surely I would die long before I found anyone. Then I spotted something in the distance. It moved and shook its head. A horse! I was saved!

As I got nearer I saw the animal was saddled but seemed to be alone. Was it lost like me? And would I be able to

get near enough to catch it? It would ease my journey greatly if I could, but it might quickly run away if I scared it.

I crept closer and closer, as slowly as I could, downwind so as not to scare the beautiful chestnut mare with my scent. I had to admit it was a very fine animal. No lowly peasant would own a horse like this.

I was very nearly there with the horse eyeing me suspiciously when a voice rang out.

‘Don’t you dare think about touching the king’s horse or I’ll cut off your hands!’

I froze with the distinct impression a blade had been placed in the small of my back.

‘I’m sorry,’ I cried out. ‘I thought the

horse was lost. Honestly, I didn’t see you there.’

‘Well, you wouldn’t,’ said the man, putting his sword away. ‘Because I am a master of subterfuge.’

With the weapon sheathed I was able to turn around and see the old weathered man. He looked near death in age, but there was still an air of wilderness about him.

‘I may be old,’ he said, ‘but I still got it. I can hide and track and sneak up on a blundering youth in a bright red turban without any trouble at all. I used to be in the king’s guard you see,’ he said proudly, ‘but after retirement I became a palace groom.’

‘Forgive me,’ I said. ‘But which king is that? I have landed here after an

accident at sea and know not where I am.'

'That'll be the great King Mihrage,' he said. 'You are lucky I found you. There's nothing here for miles. We're only a small island though and I dare say the old king will be glad to hear your tale. Come, I will take you to him.'

The island was small indeed, and King Mihrage's palace unimpressive compared to what I had seen before in other great kingdoms, but of course I was grateful for a roof over my head. I was brought before the grey-haired old sovereign as he sat on his throne.

'Welcome, stranger,' he said. 'Pray, tell us who you are and how you came by our island.'

'Greetings, great King. My name is Sinbad and I have come from a place far, far away ...'

I have a knack for good storytelling, as you can tell, and so I wove him a marvellous tale of my travels and misadventures with merchants and whales. It pleased him greatly and I was rewarded with warm hospitality.

The island was a fascinating place. So many people from so many different places stopped their boats here for fresh water and supplies. There was always something new to see, someone interesting to meet. I spent the days making myself useful, and grew from a youthful lad into a capable young man. I lost my childish form and grew fit and strong with a handsome beard

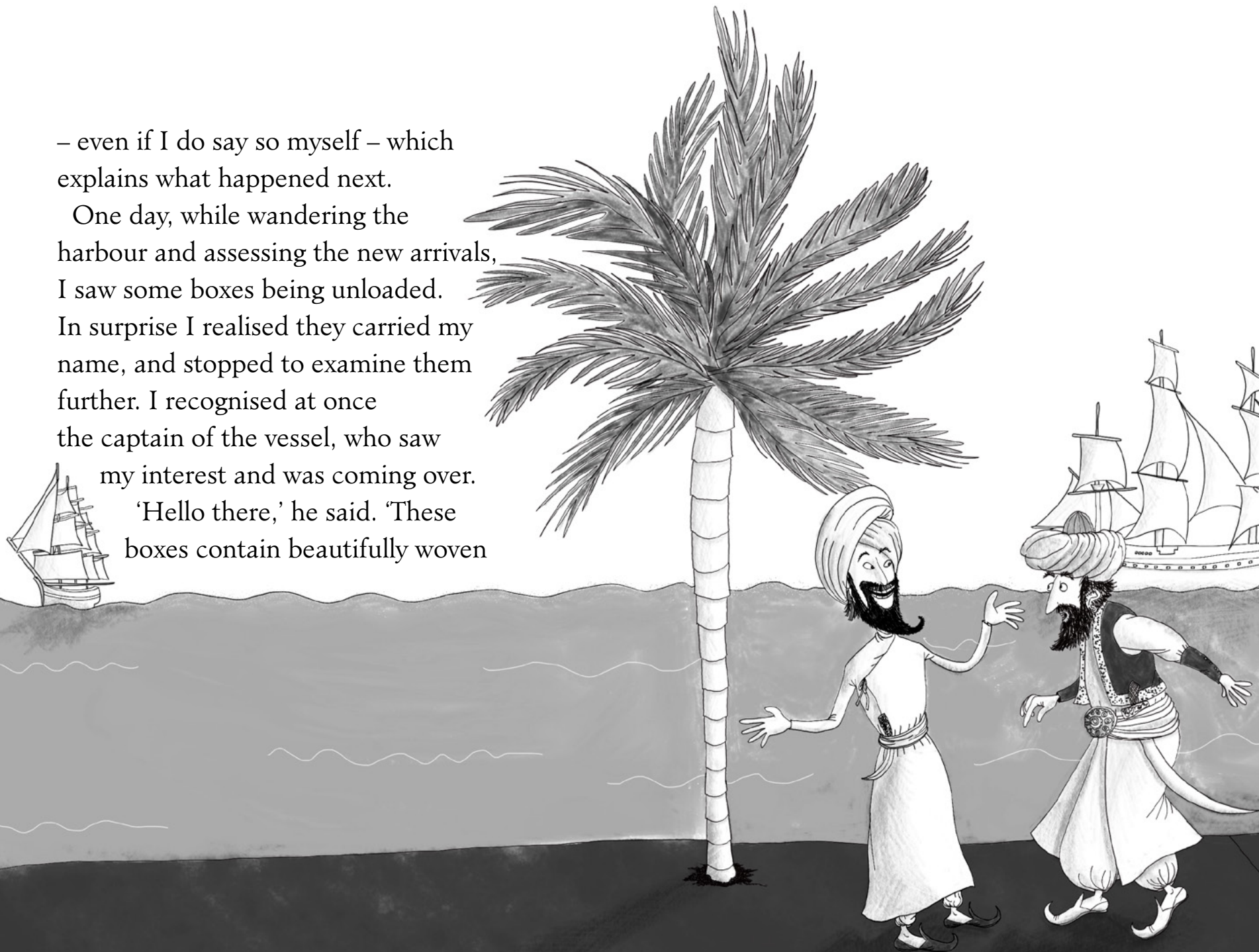
– even if I do say so myself – which explains what happened next.

One day, while wandering the harbour and assessing the new arrivals, I saw some boxes being unloaded.

In surprise I realised they carried my name, and stopped to examine them further. I recognised at once the captain of the vessel, who saw

my interest and was coming over.

‘Hello there,’ he said. ‘These boxes contain beautifully woven





rugs from Persia. Would you care to take a look?’

This was the very captain and the very ship I had left home with, but I was amused to find he did not recognise me.

‘And how did you come about these boxes?’ I asked with mischievous glee.

‘It is a very sad story,’ said the captain. ‘We had a young merchant travelling with us, much liked by the crew, but he met with a tragic accident and died. We plan to sell his stock and return any money to his family back home.

I wasn’t sure how much of the money would have actually travelled back home but that didn’t matter any more. How lucky I was to receive back my

goods! I could sell them here and make enough money to return home – maybe even on this ship!

‘You no longer need to worry about that,’ I declared joyfully. ‘For I am Sinbad and these are my boxes!’

I smiled at the captain with my arms open wide, expecting great celebration, but instead I was met by hostility and then aggression. Then the captain drew his sword!

‘Liar!’ he cried. ‘I saw young Sinbad perish with my own eyes and yet here you stand claiming to be he! How dare you say such things in order to steal his wares! I should gut you like the conniving fish you are!’

I stared at the captain in shock. Had I really changed so much that he could



no longer recognise me? The harbour guards came over to investigate the commotion and members of the ship's crew came to support their captain.

'But it's true!' I said. 'I'm no liar. I am Sinbad the merchant!'

The guards nodded that Sinbad was indeed my real name and then one of the crew I had known quite well stepped forward and covered my lower face with his hand to hide my new and manly beard.

'It is him!' the man cried. 'Our Sinbad has returned! He even still has his red turban!'

The captain lowered his sword and I was finally able to breathe again.

'You lucky old dog!' he laughed loudly. 'I nearly ran you through!'

We embraced and all was forgiven. King Mihrage was even more delighted by this addition to my miraculous tale and bought many of my Persian rugs. They were not worth much back home, but here no one had seen such fine carpets and they became much in demand, so much so that I made ten times the amount of money I paid for them. Thus after buying my passage home on the ship I was still able to stock up on items that were cheap and plentiful here, such as nutmegs, cloves, pepper, ginger and sandalwood, but which were rare back home and would make me a very rich man indeed.

*The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor*

‘Is that how you made your fortune then?’ asked the porter as he tucked into the feast at Sinbad’s table.

‘Actually that was just the beginning,’ Sinbad said. ‘For you see, even though I was able to buy a big house when I returned to Baghdad and employ several people to run it, I quickly grew bored. When you have sailed the world’s oceans and felt the wind on your face, it is hard to sit and do nothing in the stifling city.’

‘So you went travelling again?’ said the porter in surprise.

‘I did,’ smiled Sinbad.



*The Second Voyage  
The Valley of Gems*

After several months on land it was wonderful to be free at sea again. I loved the excitement of exploring the different ports, picking what to buy and who to sell to. I quickly found being a merchant was more about the person you are than the goods you have to sell. While my fellow travellers had similar things to trade, it was I with my quick humour and manly beard that made the most money. People liked me and I liked people. Life was good, too good in fact.

I became cocky. Instead of helping

## 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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## 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*  
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# Arabian Nights Adventures



As a young man Sinbad foolishly squanders all his money. With no skills and no prospect of a job, he joins a merchant vessel and sets sail from Baghdad, to trade and seek his fortune in the world. But Sinbad soon discovers he has a taste for adventure and a love for the open water, and before long he has embarked upon seven incredible voyages – seven adventures full of terrifying monsters, enchanted islands, spectacular deeds and unimaginable treasures.

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