

Arabian Nights Adventures

The
Talking Bird,
the Singing Tree
& the Golden
Water



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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HARPENDORRE

Published in Great Britain in 2017
by Harpendore Publishing Ltd
34 Priory Road, Richmond TW9 3DF, United Kingdom

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A Catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-911030-06-5 (paperback)

Designed by Anne-Lise Jacobsen
www.behance.net/annelisejacobsen

www.harpendore.co.uk

The Talking Bird, the Singing Tree & the Golden Water





Once upon a time there reigned over Persia a great sultan who had a son called Kosrou. The little prince loved to disguise himself and seek out adventures that a person of royal blood would not normally be allowed to have. This way he learned far more about the world and the people he would one day govern than from any book or tutor.

Prince Kosrou made friends with all sorts of people, from beggars to bakers to bankers, and through all these different people he learned that the world was made up of many varied

and wonderful elements. His education ranged from how to organise a nation and give speeches to riding a horse bareback across muddy fields. Even though he was a prince he knew how it felt to be told off by your friend's mum for eating a warm pie meant for tea while still covered in mud. And as the young prince grew, his adventures grew with him so that he became truly blessed with a wide understanding of the world, seeing the best in everyone.

Sadly the day came when Kosrou's father passed away. This meant that the young prince would now become sultan and it would be his job to look after the people and the land. Although Kosrou took his responsibilities very seriously, it wasn't even an hour after becoming

sultan before the young man threw off his kingly robes and stole out into the streets of the city, wearing the simple dress of a private citizen to see what the people were saying.

Everyone seemed happy and delighted with their new sultan and pleased with all the fine entertainments that had been put on to celebrate. King Kosrou was in high spirits and began to make his way back to the palace when he heard loud voices and laughter coming from a house nearby. Such fun and merriment, thought the sultan, and he casually leaned against the wall as if taking a rest so that he could peek through an open window.

Inside he saw three girls sitting upon a sofa. They ranged in age from eldest to

youngest and so Kosrou guessed them to be sisters. There was a tall, thin one who seemed to be the eldest; she was called Hawwa. The middle sister was more rounded but had fierce eyes and her name was Nailah. The youngest sister was called Ghayda and she seemed thoughtful and full of dreams. Kosrou found her most intriguing.

As Kosrou listened he discovered they were playing a game in a very lively manner, talking about who they would most like to marry from the palace.

‘I would ask for nothing more than the sultan’s own baker for a husband,’ said the eldest sister, Hawwa. ‘Think of being able to eat as much of that delicious bread as I want! Now, let us see if your future husbands are as good

as mine,’ she laughed.

‘The bread would be good I’m sure,’ replied the middle sister Nailah. ‘But I would rather marry the sultan’s head cook! I’d probably get the bread as well as all the fabulous meats, delicate stews and fragrant rice! You see, my dear sister, my taste is as good as yours – just bigger!’

They all laughed heartily and Kosrou had to admit it did sound like a very good idea.

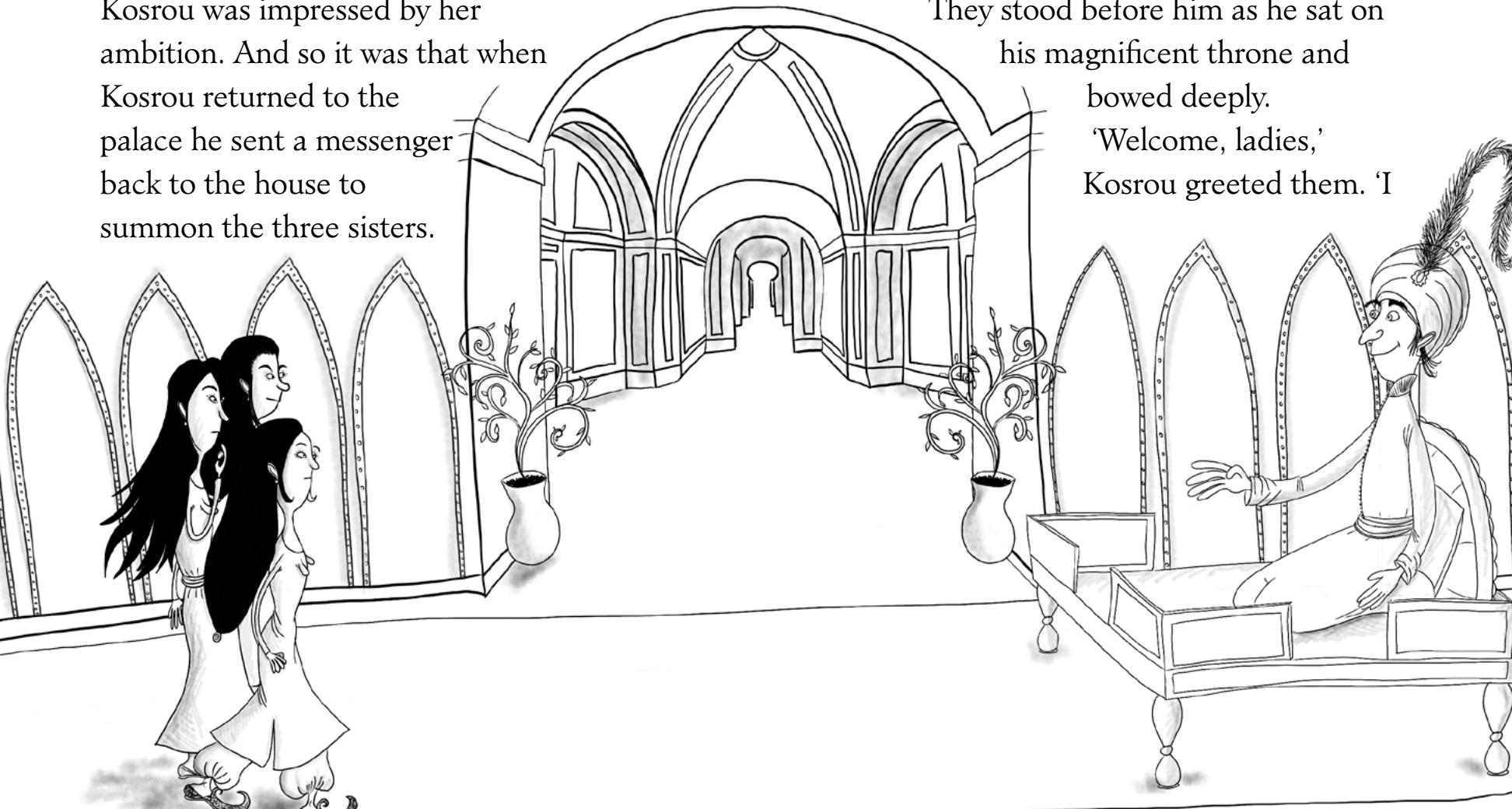
‘Your turn,’ Hawwa said to Ghayda. ‘Who would you marry?’

The youngest sister was quiet for a moment.

‘It seems to me,’ she finally said, ‘that if I could pick any man from the palace to be my husband then the

only possible answer would be the sultan himself.'

Oh how the other two girls hooted with laughter at their sister's daring, but Kosrou was impressed by her ambition. And so it was that when Kosrou returned to the palace he sent a messenger back to the house to summon the three sisters.



The next day the girls nervously arrived at the palace in their best dresses wondering what on earth the great sultan could want with them.

They stood before him as he sat on his magnificent throne and bowed deeply.
'Welcome, ladies,' Kosrou greeted them. 'I

would like to ask you a question and I require that you answer it truthfully. Fear nothing, but answer me how you truly feel.'

The sisters looked at each other with concern.

To Hawwa he then said, 'If you could marry anyone from my palace, who would you pick?'

Hawwa went quite red with embarrassment. She couldn't believe the sultan was asking her the same silly game that they had been playing the night before.

'Do not fear,' smiled Kosrou. 'But tell me truthfully, who would you choose?'

'Sire, I would wish to marry your baker,' she admitted.

'Well, here is my baker,' said Kosrou

as a jolly man in an apron stepped forward. 'Why don't you and he take a stroll around the gardens together.'

Hawwa blushed even more and giggled terribly as she and the palace baker headed outside. Next Kosrou looked at the middle sister, Nailah.

'And you? Who would you pick?' he asked.

Nailah bowed deeply in order to hide her own blushing cheeks.

'I would wish to marry your head chef, my liege,' she said.

'Well, here is my head chef,' smiled Kosrou as a tall, dark man swept over to take her arm. 'Maybe you would also like to take a stroll together?'

Nailah looked back at her youngest sister with wonderment as she and the

head chef departed, leaving Ghayda sweating in a bundle of nerves as she guessed what was coming next.

‘And you?’ Kosrou said with a mischievous twinkle in his eye. ‘Who would you wish to marry?’

Poor Ghayda paled as much as the other two had coloured.

‘You must speak the truth, remember,’ he said.

‘Oh, sire,’ she said apologetically. ‘If I could truly choose I would pick you, the sultan, to marry. But please forgive my foolish words. I am unworthy of the honour of being your wife and can only ask your pardon for my boldness.’

‘But I like your boldness,’ Kosrou said with a deeper smile.

And so it was that within a moon’s

cycle all three couples had fallen in love and were to be married. The three sisters were all delighted with their good fortune and very excited to be able to plan their weddings together. But soon the mood began to change. As Hawwa and Nailah picked dresses made of cotton, Ghayda got a gown of pure silk; as Hawwa and Nailah counted how many guests they could afford, Ghayda got to invite the entire kingdom; and whereas Hawwa and Nailah’s weddings would last a day or two, Ghayda’s would be celebrated for a whole month!

‘Why is it Ghayda gets all the best things?’ frowned Nailah. ‘She is no better than us.’

‘Indeed,’ said Hawwa. ‘Why didn’t you

or I say we wanted to marry the sultan first?’

In reality the two sisters were very fortunate to have found such fine men from the palace to marry, but they could only see that Ghayda had done better and they let their jealousy seep deep into their souls and spoil their own happiness.

And it only got worse.

‘She doesn’t have to get up at dawn to help her husband cook the bread!’ snapped Hawwa.

‘And *she* doesn’t have to scrub her husband’s dirty aprons until her fingers blister!’ scowled Nailah. ‘What does the sultan see in her anyway? You are far prettier.’

‘And you far cleverer,’ said Hawwa.

‘Either one of us would have made a better sultana.’

And so it went on. In Ghayda’s presence her sisters would pretend to be all loving and kind, but behind her back they would insult her and curse her.

Ghayda was blissfully unaware of all this, however, so madly in love with her sultan was she, just as much as he was with her. The kingdom was delighted with the match and it wasn’t long before the new sultana became pregnant.

When asked who she would like to assist her at the birth, Ghayda of course replied that she just wanted her two loving sisters. But rather than being flattered or honoured about this, the

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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Bahman, Perviz and Parizade are three siblings who spend much of their happy childhood climbing trees, building forts and shooting bows and arrows. One day a travelling dervish visits their humble cottage in the woods and talks about a mysterious bird kept prisoner by an evil sorcerer.

The children set off to rescue the bird, but they must first get past the menacing danger that lurks along the steep rocky path to the bird's hideaway. Only then does the truth about a certain mystery finally emerge ... one that has haunted the sultan and his wife for nearly two decades.



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