

Folkloric Tales: An Anthology

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FOLKLORIC TALES:
AN ANTHOLOGY

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With a preface by:

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Preface

I have been always charmed by the traditional/folkloric tales as they convey deep meanings and teach good morals through simple expressions, passing down through many generations. Such tales/fables are universal, viz., they can be understood and felt in every place and time. They don't need a specific cultural context to be comprehended therein.

As we go deep into the pages of this book, we experience the pleasure of storytelling. The challenge

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was to keep such enchantment in the target language, and I believe that the translator, Dr. Hanaa Khalifa, succeeded in such a challenge. Depending on an Arabic source of folkloric tales, Khalifa introduced a new English version of them, written in a modern literary style. Therefore, the book is attractive and amusing for all readers, young and old.

Abanoub Wagdy

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The Vizier & the Snake

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Once there was a king who had a very loyal vizier named Serbando. But the king did not notice the many services that his vizier used to perform for him.

One morning, as Serbando was walking through the forest on an errand for the king, he came across a snake caught in a trap. The snake, which was mostly white, pleaded, "Please get me out of here!" The vizier took pity on the snake and rushed to free it from the trap. In return, the snake taught Serbando the language of animals.

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Soon after, the princess lost her golden ring and accused the vizier of stealing it. "I'm innocent!" the vizier protested. But the king, convinced by his daughter, said, "Silence! If the ring does not appear within an hour, you will spend the rest of your life in the palace's dungeon."

The desperate vizier searched everywhere. When he was near the pond, he heard a duck telling another duck that she had accidentally swallowed the princess's ring.

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The king regretted his false accusation against the honorable young man. He gifted Serbando a horse and a bag of gold coins. Serbando went on his way. When he arrived at a small village, he saw a group of people in the square talking about the test which one must pass to marry the king's daughter.

Serbando said, "I'll attempt this test. Where's the royal palace?" They told him it was on the seashore. He headed there and found the king

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and beautiful princess walking along the shore.

Hearing the vizier's claims, the princess threw her bracelet into the sea and said, "Go and find it. If you do, you shall marry me. If not, you will pay the price for your audacity."

Serbando dove into the sea but had no hope of retrieving the princess's bracelet. He kept plunging into the dark waters until he reached the very bottom. He searched everywhere but

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could not find the bracelet. As he was about to drown, he called upon the snake he had once rescued to ask a fish to bring the king's daughter's bracelet to the noble young man who had helped him one day.

And thus the task was accomplished by the fish, and Serbando came out of the water with the bracelet in his hand, and this astonished the princess.

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The king told him, "You are brave and were not daunted by the test. You deserve not only to marry my daughter but also the half of my possessions."

The wedding celebrations took place amidst immense joy, and the snake was among the guests. He remarked, "What an ideal couple!"

The princess was clever, and now she is getting married to a fine young man who will one day be a just king as well."

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The Fortunate Fisherman

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There was a young fisherman called Najeeb, and one day he fortunately found his nets filled with fish. One day, he went to the market to sell them, and a merchant gave him a gold coin for the fish. Najeeb felt overjoyed, but the one who was genuinely happy was the merchant, for he found a diamond inside each fish, and thus he became fabulously wealthy.

The next day, Najeeb has his luck run out. He found only one fish, but it was magnificent. Najeeb said to himself, "I caught so much

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yesterday, so today I can allow myself to eat this fish."

Returning home, he cooked the fish and found a golden goblet inside. Najeeb felt immense joy, and thought of keeping the goblet to drink water from it. But he got amazed when he poured water into the golden goblet, for it became filled with gold coins. Again and again, he kept pouring, and each time the goblet became refilled with coins.

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The young fisherman became extraordinarily rich. After buying a splendid palace and living therein for some time, he went for a walk to explore the countryside. He stood in awe before the magnificent sultan's palace in the city. He set up a tent beside it and began to play his flute while gazing at the gardens.

The sultan's daughter listened to the beautiful music. One day she came up to him and asked about his name. "I'm Najeeb, your servant," he replied. She said, "If you are really my servant, bring me the goblet on the table." Najeeb

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responded, "I will gift it to you when you marry me." The princess promised, "Then I shall marry you."

The sultan was shocked and angry at his daughter's sudden decision. He said to her, "Have you lost your mind? If you marry him, you will have to leave my palace!" But the princess did not change her mind. She married Najeeb, and they lived happily for many long years.

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One day, Najeeb noticed a glint of sorrow into his beautiful princess's eyes. He asked, "What troubles you, my beloved?"

"I greatly miss my father," she replied. "He has grown old, and I know he suffers from my absence, and this doesn't make me happy."

The noble Najeeb decided to accompany his wife on her way to the sultan's palace. When they arrived, the princess asked the merchants, "How fares the sultan?"

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"He lives in sorrow since his daughter left,"
came the reply. "He holds no feasts in his
palace."

The princess, veiling her face, went to the
palace with her husband. She asked her
father, "Why do you seem so sad, my lord?" "I
miss my daughter, though I am afraid she has
forgotten me," said the sultan.

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The princess unveiled her face and fell into her father's arms, reassuring him of her great love.

To celebrate the reunion, Najeeb presented to the king the goblet that becomes filled with gold whenever used. Not only were they joyful, but so were all the poor in the land, for the goblet brought them much wealth and banished poverty.

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The Mouse & the Cat

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There was once a very conceited mouse. One day, while sweeping her house, she found a coin. Lucky me!" she exclaimed. "I can buy a ribbon for my hair." But then she thought, "No, no, it's better to put it on my tail." So, she bought the ribbon and tied it around her tail. She began sweeping her doorstep while singing nonstop.

A little donkey passed by and kindly greeted her, "How beautiful you are! Would you like to marry me?"

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"Don't even think about it!" she replied, "I've had it up to here!"

The donkey walked away sadly. Afterwards, a bear passed by and asked her, "Would you marry me, you beautiful mouse?" "Marry you, you big ugly thing? That will never happen!"

After that, a rooster made the same request, as did many other animals, but the conceited mouse rejected them all.

A cat watching from the roof said to himself, "Now it's my turn." He put on his best clothes,

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combed his fur nicely, and went to the mouse. In a sweet voice he asked, "Would you like to marry me, you beautiful mouse?" When the mouse heard his voice and saw how handsome he was, she enthusiastically answered "Yes, yes!"

The cat and mouse got married joyfully. Right after the wedding, the groom said to his bride, "Let's hurry home, I'm starving. Do you know how to cook?"

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The conceited mouse answered, "Of course!"

When they arrived home, she made vegetable soup. After finishing, she carried the hot bowl to the table and said, "Look at this delicious vegetable soup I've made."

"Vegetable soup? I prefer meat!" The cat started chasing the mouse, who screamed in terror and pleaded for help.

The cat said, "You have fallen into my trap, you conceited mouse! I didn't want a wife, but a tasty meal!" When the mouse was caught in

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**the cat's claws, she said, "All this happened
because of my conceit!"**

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The Last Trumpet of the Elephant

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The enormous elephant was walking very slowly and breathing audibly. As he walked, he left a trail of blood on the leaves of the plants. He wanted to go to the rest of the elephants before death could catch up to him, and thus he would never see them again.

The elephant had seen his two young sons die under the feet of the cruel hunters when they were looking for ivory in their tusks. It was they who had wounded him. In two days and two nights, the great elephant, who was becoming weaker day by day and slowing

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down due to the strenuous walking, managed to reach a plain with long grass grown over with bones, where his final dwelling place would be.

He thanked God for that, so he could stay there next to the rest of his ancestors. His last words were as follows: "Keep the traders away, so we can live happily in the forest He has given us."

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The Gift of Pearls

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There was a widow who had two very beautiful daughters. The first was named Arm, and had inherited her mother's arrogance and greed. The other was Nora, and had inherited her late father's kindness and generosity. Nora did all the housework because she never refused her mother's or sister's orders.

One day, she went out to fetch water. As she passed by a well, an old woman drew near her and said, "It's very hot and I'm extremely

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thirsty. Would you give me some water to drink?"

"Of course, yes! Drink as much as you want!"
said Nora.

"You are so beautiful and kind," said the old woman. "You deserve to have pearls come out of your mouth when you speak."

The girl returned home smiling. "You're too late and we're waiting for the water," said the mother. "I met a wonderful old woman,"

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explained the girl. Oh, how strange! Beautiful pearls were coming out of her mouth as she spoke!

When Nora told what had happened, the mother said to her elder daughter Arm: "Go now, Arm, to where your sister met the old woman. She will surely give you an even greater gift."

Arm got arrayed in her best clothes, and went to the place, carrying a jug. As she had hoped,

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the woman appeared and asked her for water. Arm brought the jug to her lips, but the woman's hand shook and the water spilled onto her clothes.

"Go away, you rude woman!" said the girl.

"You are arrogant," said the old woman, "and I wish that your mouth springs what you harbor inside."

When Arm returned home and started recounting what happened between her and the beggar woman, frogs began pouring out of

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her mouth. She began crying, as did her mother.

Nora spent three days and nights looking for the old woman until she found her. She asked her to forgive her sister.

The old woman said, "I will forgive her if you agree to give up your gift."

Nora agreed. No more pearls came from her mouth, and no more frogs from her sister's. We learned from this story the lesson of being content with what one has and living in great happiness.

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The Orphan

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Hans became an orphan when he was six years of age, but continued to live at the cottage which is in the farm where his parents had worked. He earned his living by doing work that was getting more important day by day.

Meanwhile Hans was learning the farming trade, Karl, the farm owner's son, was going to school and learning from excellent teachers. This was the only thing that Hans wished for: the ability to be educated and to have books like the ones he saw in Karl's room.

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Hans once admired the books, so Karl told him "If you learn to read, I'll lend you these books." Hans, filled with a desire to learn, tried to find someone to teach him the letters. He found the old shepherd, but he didn't know much. Still, he taught Hans what he knew in return that Hans would help him in shearing the sheep's wool.

When Karl went to the city to study, Hans would read the borrowed books at night without neglecting his work on the farm.

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The years went by. The farm's owners died, and Karl continued living in the city, engaging in trade. As for Hans, he worked on the farm so magnificently that its production increased every year. Although he had never attended school, he learned a lot from books and knew the livestock diseases and how to treat them, as well as the best types of fertilizers for farming. Everyone in the region admired his knowledge.

One day, Karl suddenly returned to the farm and said to Hans, "I've come to settle here. I've

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lost a lot in trade and went bankrupt, so I don't need you anymore."

With great sadness, because he had lived his whole life on this farm, Hans gathered his few belongings and went to a neighboring farm where they provided a job for him.

Karl's farm started deteriorating because he didn't know much about farming. So he went looking for Hans and offered that he would take half of the farm's production in exchange

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for Hans returning to his previous job. Hans agreed in order to save the son of his former master from bankruptcy.

Everyone in the area would say about him, "He is a man in the true sense of the word."

After several years, the farm expanded and became the best farm in the whole region.

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LALF VIKINGS

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Many years ago, the Vikings sailed the seas of northern Europe and seized the best and most beautiful lands. They were proud of their strength and military capability, like their leader Erik. They did not hesitate to use violence to get what they wanted.

One of them, named Laif, was the only person who avoided battles to take delight in looking at the flowers. Erik said with great sorrow that Laif was a coward, a disgrace to their lineage.

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Laif's relatives were also ashamed of his behavior. Meanwhile the Vikings would return from their campaigns laden with riches, Laif was returning with useless herbs, rare seeds, and flowers. They would say, "Everyone is getting richer except us..."

His relatives complained and on top of that he annoyed us by playing the flute! Laif would also complain: "If these lands were not always covered in snow, we could plant them with

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roses and flowers. If my brothers loved music, they would not be so fierce and warlike."

But no one understood him, and they all despised him. Erik, the fierce Viking leader, summoned Laif and told him: "You are a disgrace to our people. Either fight or leave this place."

Laif said: "I am not ready to be the cause of other people's suffering. I will go, but will return when my people's savage instincts change."

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He left amidst everyone's cursing. As he walked, he asked the elders about a way thereby he could prolong the life of flowers and make people appreciate music. They would answer: "Those are impossible things."

But an old hunchbacked man told him: "Search for the rarities...they may give you the means."

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The rarities lived in the Viking village, but Laif eagerly searched for them in faraway places, to the extent that he boarded a ship sailing into the unknown.

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Cinderella

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Once upon a time, there was a man who decided to remarry after his wife passed away. But his new wife was arrogant, controlling, and wicked, and her two daughters were even worse than she is.

This man had a beautiful, gentle, and kind daughter who was treated like a servant by her stepmother and stepsisters out of their jealousy of her.

The oppressed daughter had to clean, wash, cook food, and iron clothes. She wore tattered rags and slept on an old mattress,

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remembering, each night, beside the ashes of the hearth, her deceased mother. Meanwhile, her stepsisters got to wear the finest clothes and live in luxurious rooms. So, the stepmother and stepsisters would mock her and call her "the wretch."

It came to pass that the king invited all the maidens of the city to dance at the palace. The stepsisters prepared their finest clothes and jewelry for this grand event. On the day of the dance, their oppressed stepsister helped them dress and do their hair. They went to the

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palace, but she remained alone at home, extremely sad that she could not attend.

Just then, her fairy godmother appeared. She said "Beautify this face at once! Go into the garden and bring me the largest pumpkin you can find." With a wave of her magic wand, she turned the pumpkin into an elegant carriage. Then she said, "Now fetch me the mice from their holes!"

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The girl returned with six mice that were transformed into six magnificent horses by the magic wand. The large rat became a coachman, and some mist became footmen. In the blink of an eye, a luxurious carriage stood before the door.

The fairy godmother said, "Now it's your turn!" With a touch of her wand, Cinderella's dress became a beautiful gown embroidered with gold and silver, and her shoes became wonderful glassy slippers. Cinderella had never seen a more beautiful gown.

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The fairy warned her, "Enjoy yourself, but don't forget to return home before midnight! For at the stroke of twelve, everything will revert back to how it was before."

When Cinderella had arrived at the ball, she attracted everyone's attention, especially the prince, who kept dancing with her without stopping. Cinderella was extremely happy and forgot everything. But when she heard the clock stroke twelve, she fled without even saying goodbye to the prince.

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The prince ran after her but only found one glass slipper. The next day, the king ordered the prince to marry the owner of the glass slipper. At first the princesses tried on the slipper, then the duchesses did, and thus was done by all the ladies of the royal palace. But it did not fit any of them.

When the king's messenger arrived at the house carrying the slipper, the stepsisters tried to wear it but it did not fit into their large feet. Cinderella shyly asked, "May I try it?" The stepmother tried to prevent it, but the

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messenger put the slipper on Cinderella's foot effortlessly. Everyone was amazed.

Cinderella brought out the other slipper and put it on. At that moment, her fairy godmother transformed her dress into one even more beautiful than the one she had worn at the ball.

The stepmother and stepsisters asked Cinderella for forgiveness for treating her so badly, and she forgave them wholeheartedly.

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**Cinderella married the prince, and they lived
in great happiness.**

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The Tiger & the Fire

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The ship was crossing the land of snow when, lo and behold, a transparent mountain fell upon it, destroying it amidst the passengers' screams. After a tremendous struggle between the snow, waves and death, Laif passionately managed to rescue many of the ship's passengers and bring them ashore. They told him, "You risked your life for us. One day you will find a reward for your deed."

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After his long journey since leaving the land of snow, Laif arrived at green lands and found men who were not blond. He asked them, "Do you know where the rarities live?" Everyone shrugged their shoulders and no one answered him.

Laif reached a dense forest, laid down to rest, and in the darkness of night was attacked by a huge tiger. "Should I struggle again?" He did not want that, so he spoke gently to the tiger. They looked at each other, then the tiger walked away.

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A moment later, two men carrying torches passed by. Laif followed them, expecting they intended to hunt the tiger. Indeed, they chased after it, but it jumped toward a mountain with high rocky walls.

The two men set the forest on fire to surround the tiger. Smoke began to invade everything, but Laif cut a path with his dagger for himself and the tiger. Finally, Laif and the tiger reached a mountain stream. They were saved!

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For the second time, Life and the Panther exchanged glances - The Viking held himself without fear, walking ahead with the Panther trailing behind, searching for the land of strangers, walking all day.

And when night fell, they entered a dense tunnel of tree branches. Life heard sweet music following the sound, until he reached an opening where beautiful dancers were blowing silver trumpets and playing on glass flutes. Life said with excitement, "I think I've found the enchantresses."

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The dancers came beside him, never ceasing to dance, and the most beautiful of which turned to him saying, "We've been waiting for you, Life the Viking." Life said passionately, "I've been searching for you for a long time to fulfill two desires: first, to learn to play beautiful melodies like yours, so I can soothe the hearts of the savage warriors in my land, and second, for everything on earth to live forever." She said, "What you ask for is very difficult, but we'll try to help you understand. You'll need three moonlit nights to comprehend it."

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Three days passed with three moonlit nights, and Life, the lover of beauty, felt happiness. The enchanting queen of strangers said to him, "Now we can reveal our secrets to you. You will be a great composer able to stir the emotions of your people. As for the secret of eternal life, reach out your hand."

Life obeyed the command, and the Queen of Strangers touched with her soft fingers his rough palm, saying, "You have received the gift of eternal flower blossoms. Plant them around you with your heart filled with good

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wishes. This way, the flowers will never wither."

Life looked at his hand and found nothing, but he tried to throw something illusionary, and comely flowers appeared in the brambles. The queen added, "Take this silver trumpet, and its music will soothe the wild instincts of your people."

"It's certain that the trumpet was invisible because Life didn't see it, but he placed on his lips what he believed to be there before him,

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and he heard a wonderful melody that amazed him.

Life felt immense happiness because what he had achieved could make his Viking brothers peaceful and never return to war again. He returned to his homeland, and as he raised his silver trumpet, people went out of their camps, and their souls were soothed by the music. Everyone enjoyed the beautiful flowers which Life had planted and which never withered. The astonished Vikings no longer taught their children the art of war; instead, they became

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**musicians and gardeners. The world forgot
they ever existed, and they lived happily."**

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The Box Man

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The fisherman, Shin Ho, was an old, impoverished soul. One day, as he was heaving his net from the depths, he noticed an unusual weight, anticipating a hefty catch. Yet, to his bewilderment, the net yielded not a single fish, but rather a timeworn box. As he pried it open, a noxious smoke billowed forth, coalescing into a towering, peculiar figure who bellowed, "You must perish!"

"Is this the gratitude for your liberation?" retorted Shin Ho.

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The entity, simmering with rage from centuries of confinement, lamented, "Forgive me, but my fury overwhelmed me, trapped as I've been for eons. I vowed to slay the first one I encounter upon my release." The fisherman, intrigued, inquired, "Before you extinguish my life, reveal to me: how did you, with your colossal form, inhabit this diminutive box?"

The djinn nonchalantly disclosed the secret of his size manipulation. Swiftly, Shin Ho shut the box, unraveling the ruse. Pledging safety in exchange for freedom, he vowed to endow the fisherman with wealth. Convinced, Shin

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Ho unsealed the box, and the genie started coming out slowly.

After the genie had returned to his form, he said to the fisherman, "Follow me..." Indeed, Shin Ho followed him. After walking for some time, the man stopped beside a beautiful, small lake surrounded by rocky walls. Then he said, "Cast your net here, O fisherman, and take the fish you catch to the high-ranking official. Do not return here again, for you will not need to do so." The man disappeared, and Shin carried out his words and commands.

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When he pulled up the net, he found four fish of splendid colors. He took them and hurried to the high-ranking official, who got overjoyed to see them. He exclaimed, "Oh, kind old man, you've given back my favorite fish, which slipped away from me one day into the sea from the balcony of my summer house. I thank you immensely. Take in return for these fish four hundred gold coins."

The fisherman, filled with joy, hurried back to his family, and when he reached home, he recounted to his family what had happened with his voice emotionally breaking. "My dear

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wife, my beloved children, we have become rich. Our poverty is over, and we will never go hungry again." They didn't believe him at first, but it was indeed true.

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The Great Boy

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All the inhabitants of the island used to mock Horeem, who never played with his friends and knew nothing but working in the wood workshop. Horeem did nothing after work except gazing at the beautiful Margarita whenever he passed by her, for he was infatuated with her. However, she preferred other young men just because they enjoyed life and danced well.

One day, a storm destroyed the long bridge that connected the island to the mainland. All the islanders bitterly wondered how they could survive if food supplies ran out and no

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boat came to bring them food. While everyone complained, Horeem tirelessly cut wood and managed, through his efforts, to build a large boat. He dragged it to the shore, put it in the water, and rowed until he disappeared from sight.

Two days later, when the children cried out of hunger, he returned with the boat loaded with food. The islanders rejoiced, holding a dancing celebration, but Horeem did not attend because he had left his work to focus on the boat and the journey.

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The workshop was filled with light when Margarita appeared with her golden curls, smiling and saying, "How are you, Horeem? I didn't go to the dance because I prefer to stay with you." After a short while, Horeem married Margarita, who appreciated the value of this noble young man's work and did not regret it because they were both happy.

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The Bell

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During a celebration in a distant village, where everyone was greatly enjoying themselves, a bell rang out. Curiously, they wondered where this bell was located. They searched extensively but couldn't find it. The king offered a large reward to whoever would find it, in addition to appointing him as the Bell Count.

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All the subjects exerted great effort to find the bell, including the children. Even the king's son searched for it, leaving the palace and walking far until he found a small house covered with dense foliage. Hanging among the leaves was a small blue bell. The prince said, "This bell can't be the one I'm looking for because it's too small," and he moved away from the house.

Darkness enveloped the forest as the prince ventured further away. Suddenly, the bell rang again, ting-ting-ting. The prince thought,

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"The sound seems to be coming from the left. I'll go there." He took a few steps and found himself facing a child dressed in white. Smiling, the child asked, "Are you also searching for the bell? I'll help you, and perhaps we'll find it together." Astonished, the prince replied, "I know who you are, and it surprises me that you're searching for the bell, even though you're the king's son." The prince said, "That's not my primary concern. I know my father's subjects will rejoice to see the bell and hear its sound." At that moment, the bell rang again, ting-ting-ting. The child said, "I

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am your guardian. I found the bell because you have a good heart." The bell kept ringing, as if singing, "Peace be upon those of good will." The prince asked, "Can I carry it back to the palace?" The child answered, "No, because it's too high. You won't see it again, but you'll hear it if you remain virtuous or fulfill your duties as a king."

The young prince was exhausted, falling asleep on the forest floor, surrounded by the foliage. Before drifting off, he made a promise to his guardian: to be a kind king and to

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always look after even the welfare of his least subjects.. Overwhelmed by weariness, he succumbed to sleep, while his guardian fended off bears and other creatures that approached the prince to harm him.

When the prince woke up, his guardian was nowhere to be found. Unseen by the prince, the guardian had been protecting him, guiding a deer to carry him back to his father's palace.

When asked by his father, the king, about where he had been, the prince replied that he

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had been searching for the bell and had found it. However, it was too high for him to reach.

No one heard the bell's sound in the kingdom anymore, but the young prince never forgot the promise he made to himself. Every night, during prayers, he repeated, "I will be a kind and generous king, always seeking the happiness of my subjects."

Years passed, and the prince became a king, faithfully keeping his promise. There was no

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better or more honorable king than him, as all the subjects attested. They admired his strength of kindness and his humility of wisdom, unaware of the promise the king had made to himself as a child in front of his guardian