

الليلا

The Arabian Nights

Translated by

Husain Haddawy

Based on the text of the
Fourteenth-Century Syrian Manuscript
edited by Muhsin Mahdi

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE LIBRARY



W • W • NORTON & COMPANY
New York • London

Contents

Introduction	ix
The World of <i>The Arabian Nights</i>	ix
Dissemination and Manuscripts	xi
The Printed Editions	xiii
The Mahdi Edition	xv
Past Translations	xv
The Present Translation	xxv
The Guiding Principles xxv — The Prose xxvi —	
The Verse xxvii	
Conclusion	xxix
Acknowledgments	xxx
A Note on the Transliteration	xxx
Map: The Territory of <i>The Nights</i>	xxxi
<i>The Arabian Nights</i>	1
Foreword	2
Prologue: [The Story of King Shahrayar and Shahrazad, His Vizier's Daughter]	3
[The Tale of the Ox and the Donkey]	11
[The Tale of the Merchant and His Wife]	14
[The Story of the Merchant and the Demon]	17
[The First Old Man's Tale]	22
[The Second Old Man's Tale]	26
[The Story of the Fisherman and the Demon]	30
[The Tale of King Yunan and the Sage Duban]	36
[The Tale of the Husband and the Parrot]	41
[The Tale of the King's Son and the She-Ghoul]	42
[The Tale of the Enchanted King]	56
[The Story of the Porter and the Three Ladies]	66
[The First Dervish's Tale]	86

Copyright © 1990 by W. W. Norton & Company

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America.

The text of this book is composed in Baskerville, with display type set in Garamond. Composition by JGH Composition, Inc. Manufacturing by The Murray Printing Company. Book design by F. Fodet.

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Arabian nights. English.

The Arabian nights / translated by Husain Haddawy based on the text of the fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript; edited by Muhsin Mahdi.

p. cm.

I. Haddawy, Husain. II. Mahdi, Husain. III. Title.

PJ7715.H33 1990

398.22—dc20 89-23144

ISBN 0-393-02707-4 CLOTH
ISBN 0-393-95906-6 PAPER

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110
W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., 37 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3NU

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

quainted him with the situation, and the king was exceedingly amazed and ordered that the story be recorded. Thereafter, the vizier and his nephew and daughter lived the best of lives in prosperity and ease, eating and drinking and enjoying themselves to the end of their days.

Jafar concluded: This, O Commander of the Faithful, is what happened to the vizier of Basra and the vizier of Egypt." The caliph said, "By God, Jafar, this is the wonder of wonders," and ordered that the story be recorded. Then he freed the slave and gave the young man one of his choice concubines, settled on him a sufficient income, and made him one of his companions to the end of his days.

THE ONE HUNDRED AND SECOND NIGHT

The following night Shahrzad said:

[THE STORY OF THE HUNCHBACK]

It is related, O King, that there lived once in China a tailor who had a pretty, compatible, and loyal wife. It happened one day that they went out for a stroll to enjoy the sights at a place of entertainment, where they spent the whole day in diversions and fun, and when they returned home at the end of the day, they met on the way a jolly hunchback. He was smartly dressed in a folded inner robe and an open outer robe, with gathered sleeves and an embroidered collarband, in the Egyptian style, and sporting a scarf and a tall green hat, with knots of yellow silk stuffed with ambergris.⁵ The hunchback was short, like him of whom the poet 'Antar⁶ said:

Lovely the hunchback who can hide his hump,
Like a pearl hidden in an oyster shell,
A man who looks like a castor oil branch,
From which dangles a rotten citric lump.

He was busy playing on the tambourine, singing, and improvising all kinds of funny gestures. When they drew near and looked at

5. Waxy substance secreted by the intestinal tract of the sperm whale, often found floating in the sea, and used in the manufacture of perfume.

6. Pre-Islamic hero, and author of one the Arabic Golden Odes.

him, they saw that he was drunk, reeking of wine. Then he placed the tambourine under his arm and began to beat time by clapping his hands, as he sang the following verses:

Go early to the darling in you jug;
Bring her to me,
And fete her as you fete a pretty girl,
With joy and glee,
And make her as pure as a virgin bride,
Unveiled to please,
That I may honor my friend with a cup
Of wine from Greece.
If you, my friend, care for the best in life,
Life can repay,
Then at this moment fill my empty cup,
Without delay.
Don't you, my tantalizer, on the plain
The gardens see?

But morning overtook Shahrzad, and she lapsed into silence. Then Dinarzad said to her sister, "What a strange and entertaining story!" Shahrzad replied, "What is this compared with what I shall tell you tomorrow night if the king spares me and lets me live!"

THE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRD NIGHT

The following night Shahrzad said:

It is related, O King, that when the tailor and his wife saw the hunchback in this condition, drunk and reeking of wine, now singing, now beating the tambourine, they were delighted with him and invited him home to sup and drink with them that night. He accepted gladly and walked with them to their home.

Then the tailor went to the market—it was already dark—and bought bread, fried fish, radishes, lemons, and a bowl of honey, as well as a candle to give them light during their carousing. When he returned, he set the bread and fish before the hunchback, and the wife joined them for supper. The tailor and his wife were pleased to have the hunchback with them, saying to each other, "We will spend the night carousing, bantering, and amusing ourselves with this hunchback." They ate until they were satisfied. Then the tailor took a piece of fish and, cramming it in the hunchback's mouth, held it shut and said laughing, "By God, you must swallow the whole

piece." The hunchback, unable to breathe, could not wait to chew, and he hastened to swallow the piece, which happened to have a large bone, which stuck in his throat and choked him. When the tailor saw the hunchback's eyes rolled up, he raised his hand and boxed him on the chest, and the hunchback's soul left his body and he slumped lifeless. The tailor and his wife were stunned and, trembling, said, "There is no power and no strength, save in God, the Almighty, the Magnificent. How soon was his appointed hour!" The wife said to her husband the tailor, "Why do you sit still and do nothing? Haven't you heard the poet say:

How can you sit and let the fire rage on?
Such idleness brings ruin and destruction."

The tailor asked, "What shall I do?" and she replied, "Rise, carry him in your arms, cover him with a silk shawl, and follow me. If anybody sees us in the dark, we shall say, 'This is our sick boy who took ill a short while ago, and since the doctor could not come to see him, we are taking him there.' If we do that . . ."

But morning overtook Shahrāzād, and she lapsed into silence. Then Dīnārād said to her sister, "What a strange and amusing story!" Shahrāzād replied, "What is this compared with what I shall tell you tomorrow night if I stay alive!"



THE ONE HUNDRED AND FOURTH NIGHT

The following night Shahrāzād said:

It is related, O King, that the tailor carried the hunchback in his arms, covered him with a silk shawl, and followed his wife, who led the way, wailing and saying, "O my boy, may you recover from your illness. Where has this smallpox been lying in wait for us?" so that whoever saw them said, "These two have a child stricken with the smallpox," until someone directed them to the house of a Jewish physician. When the wife knocked at the door, a maid came down, and when she opened the door, she saw a man carrying a sick child. The wife handed her a quarter-dinar and said, "Miss, give this to your master, and let him come down to see my child, who is gravely ill." As soon as the maid went upstairs, the wife went in, saying to her husband, "Let us leave the hunchback here and run." The tailor propped up the hunchback, leaving him standing in the middle of the Jew's staircase, and went away with his wife.

Meanwhile the maid went to the Jew and said to him, "Master, there are people downstairs, carrying a sick child, and they have sent you this quarter-dinar to go down to see him and prescribe for him." When the Jew saw the quarter-dinar as a fee for merely going downstairs, he was pleased and in his joy rose hastily in the dark, saying to the maid, "Bring me light," and descended hurriedly in the dark. But hardly had he taken a step when he stumbled on the hunchback, who fell and rolled to the bottom of the stairs. The Jew was startled and shouted to the maid, "Hurry with the light." When she brought it, he went down and, finding the hunchback dead, said, "O Esdras, O Moses, O Aaron, O Joshua son of Nun! It seems that I have stumbled against this sick fellow, and he has fallen downstairs and died. By the hoof of Esdras's ass, how shall I get this dead body out of my house?" Then he carried the body upstairs, and when he told his wife about it, she said to him, "Why do you sit still? If the day breaks and he is still here, we will both lose our lives. You are naïve and careless." Then she recited the following verses:

You thought well of the days, when they were good,
Oblivious to the ill life brings to one.
You were deluded by the peaceful nights,
Yet in the peace of night does sorrow stum.

But morning overtook Shahrāzād, and she lapsed into silence. Then Dīnārād said, "Sister, what a strange and entertaining story!" Shahrāzād replied, "What is this compared with what I shall tell you tomorrow night if the king spares me and lets me live!"



THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTH NIGHT

The following night Shahrāzād said:

I heard, O King, that the Jew's wife said to him, "Why do you sit still? Rise at once and let us carry the body to the roof and throw it into the house of our neighbor, the Muslim bachelor." It happened that the Jew's neighbor was the steward of the king's kitchen, who used to bring home a great deal of cooking butter, which, together with everything else he brought, was eaten by the cats and mice, which caused considerable loss. The Jew and his wife took the hunchback up to the roof, carried him little by little to the steward's house and, holding him by the hands and feet, lowered him until he reached the ground. Then they propped him up against the wall and went away.

No sooner had they descended from the roof than the steward, who had been at a recitation of the Quran, came home in the middle of the night, carrying a lighted candle. He opened the door, and when he entered his house, he found a man standing in the corner, under the ventilator, and said, "By God, this is a fine thing! My food has been stolen by none other than a man. You kept taking the meat and the fat sheep tails and scooping out the cooking butter, and I kept blaming the cats and dogs and mice. I have killed many cats and dogs and have sinned against them, while you have been coming down the windshaft to steal my provisions, but now, by God, I will avenge myself on you with my own hands." Then he took a heavy club and with one leap stood before the hunchback and gave him a heavy blow on the rib cage, and as the hunchback fell, he gave him another blow on the back. Then looking at his face and seeing that he was dead, he cried out, saying, "Alas! I have killed him. There is no power and no strength, save in God, the Almighty, the Magnificent." Then he turned pale with fear for himself, saying, "May God curse the cooking butter and curse this night! To God we belong and to Him we return."

But morning overtook Shahrazad, and she lapsed into silence. Then Dinarzad said to her sister, "What a strange and entertaining story!" Shahrazad replied, "What is this compared with what I shall tell you tomorrow night if the king spares me and lets me live!"



THE ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTH NIGHT

The following night Shahrazad said:

It is related, O happy King, that when the steward saw that the man was a hunchback, he said, "O hunchback, O cursed man! Wasn't it enough for you to be a hunchback, but you had to turn thief too? What shall I do? O Protector, protect me!" Then as it was getting toward the end of the night, he carried the hunchback on his back and went out with him until he reached the entrance of the market, where he set him on his feet against a shop, at the corner of a dark alley, and went away.

Soon there came a prominent Christian tradesman, who had a workshop and was the king's broker. He was drunk, and in his drunkenness he had left home, heading for the bath, thinking that morning prayers were near. He came staggering along until he drew near the hunchback and squatted in front of him to urinate and,

happening to look around, suddenly saw a man standing before him. It so happened that early that night, someone had snatched off the Christian's turban, so that when he saw the hunchback standing before him, he thought that he too was going to snatch off his turban. He clenched his fist and boxed the hunchback on the neck, knocking him down. Then crying out for the watchman, he fell in his drunkenness on the hunchback, pummeling him and choking him. When the watchman came up to the lamp-post and saw a Christian kneeling on a Muslim and beating him, he asked, "What is the matter?" The Christian replied, "This man tried to snatch off my turban." The watchman said, "Get up from him," and when the Christian got up, the watchman drew close to the hunchback and, finding that he was dead, said, "By God, this is a fine thing, a Christian killing a Muslim!" Then he seized the Christian broker, bound him, and brought him in the night to the house of the chief of the police. The Christian was bewildered, wondering how he could have killed the fellow so quickly with one blow of the fist, as "drunkenness left him and reflection returned." Then he and the hunchback passed the night in the chief's house.

In the morning, the chief went up to the king and informed him that his Christian broker had killed a Muslim. The king ordered that the broker be hanged, and the chief went down and bade the executioner proclaim the sentence. Then the hangman set up a gallows, under which he made the Christian stand, put the rope around his neck and was about to hang him, when the steward of the king's kitchen made his way through the crowd and said to the executioner, "Stop! This man did not kill the fellow; I am the one who killed him." The chief asked, "What did you say?" The steward replied, "I am the one who killed him." Then he related to him his story, how he hit the hunchback with the club and how he carried him and propped him up in the market, adding, "Is it not enough for me to have killed a Muslim, without burdening my conscience with the death of a Christian too? On my own confession, hang no one but me."

But morning overtook Shahrazad, and she lapsed into silence. Then Dinarzad said to her sister, "What a strange and entertaining story!" Shahrazad replied, "What is this compared with what I shall tell you tomorrow night if the king spares me and lets me live!"

الحل

THE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTH NIGHT

The following night Shahrazad said:

I heard, O happy King, that when the chief heard the steward's words, he said to the hangman, "Release the Christian, and hang this man, on the strength of his confession." The hangman, after releasing the Christian, made the steward stand under the gallows, put the rope around his neck, and was about to hang him, when the Jewish physician made his way through the crowd and cried out to the hangman, "Stop! This man did not kill the fellow; I am the one who killed him. Last night I was sitting at home after the markets closed, when a man and a woman knocked at the door. When the maid went down and opened the door, she found that they had a sick person with them. They gave the maid a quarter-dinar, and she brought it up to me and told me about them, but no sooner had she come up than they rushed in and placed the sick person at the top of the stairs. When I went down, I stumbled on him, and the two of us rolled to the bottom of the stairs, and he died instantly. No one was the cause of his death but I. Then my wife and I carried the dead hunchback to the roof and let him down, through the windshaft, into the house of this steward, which adjoins ours, and left him standing in the corner. When the steward came home, he found a man standing there and, thinking that he was a thief, hit him with a club, knocking him down flat on his face, and concluded that he had killed him, whereas in truth none killed him but I. Is it not enough for me to have involuntarily and unwillingly killed one Muslim, without burdening my conscience with the death of another Muslim? Don't hang him, for no one killed the hunchback but I."

But morning overtook Shahrazad, and she lapsed into silence. Then Dinarzad said to her sister, "What a strange and entertaining story!" Shahrazad replied, "What is this compared with what I shall tell you tomorrow night if the king spares me and lets me live!"

الحل

THE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTH NIGHT

The following night Shahrazad said:

I heard, O happy King, that when the chief heard the Jew's words, he said to the hangman, "Release the steward and hang the Jew." The hangman seized the Jew and put the rope around his neck, when the tailor made his way through the crowd and said to the hangman, "Stop! This man did not kill him, and none killed him but I." Then turning to the chief, he said, "My lord, none killed the hunchback but I. Yesterday I went out to see the sights, and when I returned in the evening, I met the hunchback, who was drunk and singing and playing on the tambourine. I invited him home with me and then went out, bought fried fish for him, and brought it back. Then we sat to eat, and I took a piece of fish and crammed it down his throat, and he choked on a bone and died instantly. My wife and I were frightened, and we carried him to the Jew's house. We knocked at the door, and when the maid came down and opened the door, I said to her, 'Go up and tell your master that there are a man and a woman downstairs, with a sick person for him to see,' handing her a quarter-dinar to give to her master. As soon as she went up, I carried the hunchback to the top of the stairs, propped him up, and went down and ran with my wife. When the Jew came down, he stumbled against the hunchback and thought that he had killed him." Then the tailor turned to the Jew and asked, "Isn't this the truth?" The Jew replied, "Yes, this is the truth." Then turning back to the chief, the tailor said, "Release the Jew and hang me, since I am the one who killed the hunchback." When the chief heard the tailor's words, he marveled at the adventure of the hunchback and said, "There is a mystery behind this story, and it should be recorded in the books, even in letters of gold." Then he said to the hangman, "Release the Jew and hang the tailor on his own confession." The hangman released the Jew and placed the tailor under the gallows, saying to the chief, "I am tired of stringing up this man and releasing that, without any result." Then he put the rope around the tailor's neck and threw the other end over the pulley.

It happened that the hunchback was the favorite clown of the king of China, who could not bear to be without him even for the bating of an eye, so that when the hunchback got drunk and failed to make his appearance that night . . .

But morning overtook Shahrazad, and she lapsed into silence. Then Dinarzad said, "Sister, what a strange and entertaining story!"

Shahrazad replied, "What is this compared with what I shall tell you tomorrow night if the king spares me and lets me live!"

أليس

THE ONE HUNDRED AND NINTH NIGHT

The following night Shahrazad said:

I heard, O happy King, that when the hunchback got drunk and failed to make his appearance before the king that night, and when the king waited for him in vain the next day until it was close to noon, he at last inquired about him from one of those present, who replied, "I heard, O King, that the chief of the police found a dead hunchback and caught his murderer. But when he was about to hang him, a second and a third man came forward, and each claimed to be the murderer. They are still there, each telling the chief how the hunchback died." When the king of China heard these words, he called out to one of his chamberlains, saying, "Go down and bring me everyone, the chief, the murdered man, and the murderers." The chamberlain went down at once and arrived just when the hangman had put the rope around the tailor's neck and was about to hoist him up. He cried out to the hangman, "Stop!" and, turning to the chief, relayed to him the king's order. The chief took the tailor, the Jew, the steward, and the Christian, together with the hunchback, carried on a litter, and brought them all before the king. He kissed the ground before him and related to him their adventures with the hunchback, from beginning to end. When the king of China heard the story, he was very much amazed and moved to mirth, and he ordered that the story be recorded, saying to those around him, "Have you ever heard anything more amazing than the adventure of the hunchback?" The Christian broker came forward and, kissing the ground before the king, said, "O King of the age, with your leave, I will tell you a more amazing story that happened to myself, a story that will make even the stone weep." The king replied, "Tell us your story." The Christian said:

[The Christian Broker's Tale: The Young Man with the Severed Hand and the Girl]

O King, I came as a stranger to your country, bringing merchandises with me, and was fated to stay here these many years. I was born

a Copt,⁷ a native of Cairo. My father was a prominent broker, and when he died, I became a broker in his place and worked there for many years. One day, as I was sitting in the market of the fodder merchants in Cairo, a handsome and finely dressed young man, riding a tall ass, came up to me. He saluted me, and I rose in salute. Then he took out a handkerchief containing sesame and asked me, "How much is the measure worth?"

But morning overtook Shahrazad, and she lapsed into silence. Then Dinarzad said, "Sister, what a strange and entertaining story!" Shahrazad replied, "What is this compared with what I shall tell you tomorrow night if the king spares me and lets me live!"

أليس

THE ONE HUNDRED AND TENTH NIGHT

The following night Shahrazad said:

I heard, O happy King, that the Christian broker said to the king of China:

O King of the age, I replied to the young man, "It is worth a hundred dirhams." He said, "Take a measurer and some porters and come to the al-Jawli Caravansary,⁸ by the Gate of Victory, where you will find me." I rose and went to find a buyer, making the rounds of the sesame merchants, confectioners, and fodder dealers, and got one hundred dirhams per measure. Then I took with me four teams of porters and went with them to the al-Jawli Caravansary, where I found the young man waiting for me. As soon as he saw me, he rose and led me to the storeroom, saying, "Let the measurer enter to measure, while the porters load the donkeys." The porters kept loading, one team coming and one team going, until they emptied the storeroom, carrying fifty measures in all, costing five thousand dirhams. Then the young man said to me, "Take ten dirhams per measure for your brokerage, and keep my share of four thousand and five hundred dirhams with you. When I finish selling the rest of my crop, I will come to you and take the money." I replied, "Very well," kissed his hand, and departed, surprised at his liberality.

For a month I sat waiting for him until he finally came and asked, "Where is the money?" I welcomed him and invited him to sit with

⁷ Egyptian Christian.

⁸ Inn with a large courtyard, where caravans could rest during the night.