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ALI BABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES

from

The Arabian Nights (One Thousand and One Nights)

In a town of Persia lived two brothers, sons of a poor man; one named Cassim, the other Ali Baba. Cassim, the elder, married a wife with a considerable fortune, and lived at his ease; but the wife of Ali Baba was as poor as himself: they dwelt in a mean cottage in the suburbs, and he maintained his family by cutting wood.

Ali Baba was in the forest preparing to load his asses (donkeys) with the faggots (kindling) he had cut, when he saw a troop of horsemen approaching. He hastily climbed a large thick tree and hid himself among the branches.



Ali Baba counted forty of them; each took a loaded portmanteau from his horse, and turning to the rock, said, "Open, Sesame."

Immediately a door opened, the robbers passed in, and the door shut of itself. In a short time, the door opened again, and the robbers came out, who said, "Shut, Sesame." The door instantly closed.

Ali Baba ventured down and approaching the rock, said, "Open, Sesame."

Immediately the door flew open. He brought his asses and took as many bags of gold coin as they could carry.



Ali Baba told his brother the secret of the cave. Cassim rose early next morning and set out with ten mules loaded with great chests. He found the rock, and having said, "Open Sesame," gained admission, where he found more treasures than he expected, which made him forget the word that caused the door to open.

Presently, he heard the sound of horses' feet, which he concluded to be the robbers, who instantly put him to death.

Ali Baba drove to the forest, and on entering the cave, he found the body of his brother cut into quarters. He took the quarters and put them upon one of his asses and delivered the body to Cassim's wife.

Morgiana, a female slave in his brother's house, was sent early next morning to a poor cobbler and gave him two pieces of gold to go with her blindfolded. Taking him into the room where the body was lying, bade him sew the mangled limbs together. Mustapha obeyed, having received two pieces of gold, and was led blindfolded the same way back.

Cassim was buried with all due solemnity, and Ali Baba removed to the house of his deceased brother, of which he took possession.

The captain of the thieves' troop resolved to find out who possessed the secret of entrance into his cave. Disguising himself, he went to the city early one morning, when, accosting the cobbler, he was told of the job he had, who for six pieces of gold, allowed himself to be blindfolded, and traced out the house of Cassim, which the robber marked with chalk.

Buying nineteen mules and thirty-nine large jars, one full of oil, and the rest empty, the captain put a man into each jar, properly armed, and then proceeded to the street where Ali Baba dwelt. "Sir," said he, "I have brought this oil a great way to sell; as I am quite a stranger, will you let me put my mules into your courtyard, and direct me where I may lodge tonight?"

Ali Baba welcomed the pretended oil merchant, offered him a bed in his own house, and invited his guest to supper.

Morgiana, sitting up later that night than usual, her lamp went out. She took her oil pot in her hand, and approaching the first oil jar, the robber within said, "Is it time, captain?"

She replied, "No, not yet;" so she ran back to the kitchen and brought out a large kettle, which she filled with oil. She set it on a great wood fire and as soon as it boiled, she went and poured into the jars sufficient of the boiling oil to kill every man within.



The captain of the robbers arose to assemble his men. Coming to the first jar, he felt the steam of the boiled oil! He ran hastily to the rest and found every one of his troop put to death. Full of rage, he forced the lock of the door and made his escape over the walls.

Without letting anyone into the secret, Ali Baba and Morgiana the next night buried the thirty-nine thieves at the bottom of the garden. The captain of the troop, however, determined to adopt a new scheme for the destruction of Ali Baba. He removed all the valuable merchandise from the cave to the city and took a shop exactly opposite to Ali Baba's house. Ali Baba's son went every day to his shop. The pretended Cogia Hassan (the thief captain) soon appeared to be very fond of Ali Baba's son, offered him many presents, and often detained him to dinner.

Ali Baba thought it was necessary to make some return to these civilities, and he invited Cogia Hassan to supper. Morgiana, the slave girl, carried in the first dish herself.

The moment she looked at Cogia Hassan, she knew it was the pretended oil merchant. She sent the other slaves into the kitchen and waited at the table herself. While Cogia Hassan was drinking, she perceived he had a dagger hidden under his coat. She went away and dressed herself in the costume of a dancing girl. As soon as she appeared at the parlor door, her master ordered her to come in to entertain his guest with some of her best dancing.

Morgiana danced several times before the assembled company, until, coming opposite Cogia Hassan, she drew a dagger from her girdle and plunged it into the robber's heart. As a reward for her faithfulness, Ali Baba gave her in marriage to his son, and at his death put them in possession of his immense wealth.



THE END