

ALI BABA:

OR THE

FORTY THIEVES,

AN INTERESTING TALE.



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IN the country of Persia, there lived two brothers, the sons of a poor man; the one was named Cassim, and the other Ali Baba; Cassim, the elder, married a wife with a considerable fortune, and lived at his ease, in a handsome house, with plenty of servants; but the wife of Ali Baba was as poor as himself, they dwelt in a mean cottage in the suburbs of the city, and he maintained his family by cutting wood in a neighbouring forest.

One day when Ali Baba was in the forest and prepared to load his asses with the wood he had cut, he saw a troop of horsemen approaching towards him. He had often heard of robbers who infested that forest, and in great fright, he hastily climbed a large tree, which stood near the foot of a rock, and hid himself among the branches.

The horsemen soon galloped up to the rock, where they all dismounted. Ali Baba counted forty of them, and he could not

doubt, but they were thieves, by their ill-looking countenances. They each took a loaded portmanteau from his horse, and he who seemed to be their captain, turning to the rock, said OPEN SESAME, and immediately a door opened in the rock, and all the robbers passed in, when the door shut of itself. In a short time the door opened again, and the forty robbers came out, followed by their captain, who said, SHUT SESAME. The door instantly closed, and the troop mounting their horses, were presently out of sight.

Ali Baba remained in the tree a long time, and seeing that the robbers did not return, he ventured down, and approaching close to the rock, said, Open Sesame, immediately the door flew open, and Ali Baba beheld a spacious cavern, very light, and filled with all sorts of provisions, merchandise, rich stuffs, and heaps of gold and silver coin, which these robbers had taken from merchants and travellers. Ali Baba then went in search of his asses, and having brought them to the rock, took as many bags of gold coin as they could carry, and put them on their backs, covering them with some loose faggots of wood, and afterwards (not forgetting to say Shut Sesame,) he drove his asses back to the city, and having unload

stable belonging to his cottage, carried the bags into his house, and spread the gold coin out upon the floor before his wife.

His wife delighted with possessing so much money, wanted to count it, but finding it would take up too much time, she was resolved to measure it; and running to the house of Ali Baba's brother, she entreated him to lend her a small measure.

Cassim's wife was very proud and very envious: "I wonder," said she to herself, "what sort of grain such poor people can have to measure; but I am determined I will find out what they are doing." So before she gave the measure, she artfully rubbed the bottom with some suet.

Away ran Ali Baba's wife, measured the money, and having helped her husband to bury it in the yard, she carried back the measure to her brother-in-law's house, without perceiving that a piece of gold was left sticking to the bottom of it.

"Fine doings, indeed!" cried Cassim's wife to her husband, after examining the measure, "your brother there who pretends to be so very poor, is richer than you are, for he does not count his money, but measures it.

Cassim hearing these words, and seeing the piece of gold, grew as envious as his

wife, and hastened to his brother, threatened to inform the Cadi of his wealth, if he did not confess to him how he came by it. Ali Baba, without hesitation, told him the history of the robbers, and the secret of the cave, and offered him half his treasure; but the envious Cassim disdained so poor a sum, resolved to have fifty times more than that out of the robbers' cave.

Accordingly he rose early next morning, and set out with ten mules loaded with great chests. He found the rock easily enough by Ali Baba's description, and having said Open Sesame, he gained admission into the cave; where he found more treasure than he even had expected to behold from his brother's account of it. He immediately began to gather bags of gold, and pieces of rich brocades, all which he piled close to the door; but when he had got together as much, or even more than his ten mules could possibly carry, and wanted to get out to load them. The thoughts of his wonderful riches had made him entirely forget the word which caused the door to open. In vain he tried Bame, Fame, Lame, Tatame, and a thousand others; the door remained as immoveable as the rock itself, notwithstanding Cassim kicked and screamed, till he was ready to drop with fatigue and vexation. Presently he heard the sound of horses' feet,

which he rightly concluded to be the robbers, and he trembled lest he should now fall a victim to his thirst of riches.

He resolved however to make one effort to escape; and when he heard Sesame pronounced, and saw the door open, he sprung out but was instantly put to death by the swords of the robbers.

The thieves now held a council, but not one of them could possibly guess by what means Cassim had got into the cave. They saw the heaps of treasure he had piled, ready to take away, but they did not miss what Ali Baba had secured before. At length, they agreed to cut Cassim's body into four quarters, and hang the pieces within the cave, that it might terrify any one from further attempts, and also determined not to return themselves to the cave, for fear of being watched and discovered.

When Cassim's wife saw night come on and her husband not returned, she became greatly alarmed. She watched at her window till daybreak, and then went to tell Ali Baba of her fears. Cassim had not informed him of his design of going to the cave, but Ali Baba now hearing of his journey thither, did not wait to be desired to go in search of him.

He drove his asses to the forest without delay, but was alarmed to see blood near

the rock ; and on entering the cave, he found the body of his unfortunate brother cut to pieces and hung up within the door. It was now too late to save him, but he took down the quarters, and put them upon one of his asses, covering them with faggots of wood, and weeping for the miserable end of his brother, he regained the city.

The door of his brother's house was opened by Morgiana, an intelligent faithful female slave, who Ali Baba knew was worthy to be trusted with the secret, he therefore delivered the body to Morgiana, and went himself to impart the sad news to Cassim's wife. The poor woman was sadly afflicted, and reproached herself with her foolish envy and curiosity as being the cause of her husband's death ; but Ali Baba having convinced her of the necessity of being very discreet, she checked her lamentations, and resolved to leave every thing to the management of Morgiana.

Morgiana having washed the body, hastened to an apothecary's and asked for some particular medicine, saying it was for her master, Cassim, who was dangerously ill. She took care to spread the report of Cassim's illness through the neighbourhood, and as they saw Ali Baba and his wife going daily to the house of their brother

in great affliction, they were not surprised to hear shortly, that Cassim had died of his disorder.

The next difficulty was to bury him without discovery, but Morgiana was ready to contrive a plan for that also. She put on her veil, and went to a distant part of the city very early in the morning, where she found a poor cobbler just opening his stall, she put a piece of gold into his hand, and told him he should have another, if he would suffer himself to be blindfolded and go with her, carrying his tools with him. Mustapha the cobbler hesitated at first, but the gold tempted him, and he consented; when Morgiana, carefully covering his eyes, so that he could not see a step of the way, led him to Cassim's house; and taking him to the room where the body was lying, removed the bandage from his eyes, and bade him sew the mangled limbs together.

Mustapha obeyed her orders, and having received two pieces of gold, was led blindfolded the same way back to his stall.

Morgiana then covered the body with a winding sheet, sent for the undertaker to make preparations for the funeral: and Cassim was buried with all due solemnity that very day.

Ali Baba now removed his few goods

and all his gold coin that he had brought from the cavern, to the house of his deceased brother, of which he took possession; and Cassim's widow received every kind attention both from Ali Baba and his wife.

After an interval of some months, the troop of robbers again visited their retreat in the forrest, and were completely astonished to find the body taken away from the cave, and every thing else remaining in its usual order. "We are discovered," said the captain, "and shall certainly be undone if we do not adopt speedy measures to prevent our ruin. Which of you, my brave comrades, will undertake to search out the villian who is in possession of our secret?"

One of the boldest of the troop advanced, and offered himself, and was accepted on the following conditions: namely, that if he succeeded in his enterprize, he was to be made second in command of the troop, but that if he brought false intelligence, he was immediatly to be put to death.

The bold robber readily agreed to the conditions: and having disguised himself, he proceeded to the city. He arrived there about day-break, and found the cobbler Mustapha in his stall, which was always open before any shop in the town.

“Good morrow, friend,” said the robber, as he passed the stall; “you rise betimes, old as you are; I should think you could scarcely see to work by this light.”

“Indeed, sir,” replied the cobbler, “old as I am I do not want for good eye-sight, as you must needs believe, when I tell you I sewed a dead body together the other day where I had not so good a light as I have now.”

“A dead body!” exclaimed the robber, who had thus luckily met the very man who could give him the information he was in search of. “However you do not wish to make me believe, that the people of your city do impossible things.”

“I tell you,” said Mustapha, in a loud and angry tone, “I sewed a dead body together with my own hands.”

“Then I suppose you can tell me also where you performed this wonderful business.”

Upon this Mustapha related every particular of his being led blindfolded to the house.

“Well, my friend,” said the robber, “’tis a fine story, I confess, but not very easy to believe: however, if you will convince me by shewing me the house on talk of I will give you four p

of gold to make amends for my unbelief."

"I think," said the cobbler, after considering awhile, "that if you were to blindfold me, I would remember every turning we made, but with my eyes open I am sure I would never find it out."

Accordingly the robber covered Mustapha's eyes with his handkerchief, who led him through most of the principal streets, and stopping by Cassim's door, said "here it is, I went no farther than this house."

The robber immediately marked the door with a piece of chalk; and giving Mustapha his four pieces of gold, dismissed him.

Shortly after the thief and Mustapha had quitted the door, Morgiana coming from market, perceived the little mark of white chalk on the door; and suspecting something was wrong, directly marked four doors on one side, and five on the other side of her master's in exactly the same manner, without telling any one of it.

The robber meantime rejoined his troop and boasted greatly of his success. His captain and comrades praised his diligence, and being well armed, they proceeded to the town in different disguises and in separate parties of three and four together.

It was agreed among them that they were to meet in the market place at the dusk of the evening, and that the captain and the robber who had discovered the house, were to go there first, to find out to whom it belonged. Accordingly, being arrived in the streets, and having a lantern with them, they began to examine the doors, and found, to their confusion and astonishment, that ten doors were marked exactly alike. The robber, who was the captain's guide, could not say one word in explanation of this mystery; and when the disappointed troop got back to the forest, his enraged companions ordered him to be put to death.

Another now offered himself upon the same conditions as the former; and having bribed Mustapha, and discovered the house he made a mark with dark red chalk upon the door in a part that was not in the least conspicuous, and carefully examined the surrounding doors, to be certain that no such mark was upon any one of them.

But nothing could escape the prying eyes of Morgiana, scarcely had the robber departed when she discovered the red mark; and getting some red chalk, she marked seven doors on each side precisely in the same place and in the same manner.

The robber, valuing himself highly upon

the precautions he had taken, triumphantly conducted his captain to the spot, but great indeed was his confusion and dismay, when he found it impossible to say which, among fifteen houses marked exactly alike, was the right one. The captain furious with his disappointment, returned again with the troop to the forest; and the second robber was also condemned to death.

The captain having thus lost two of his troop, judged that their hands were more active than their heads in such service; and he resolved to employ no other of them, but to go himself upon the business.

Accordingly he repaired to the city, and addressed himself to the cobbler Mustapha, who for six pieces of gold readily performed the same service for him as he had done for the two other strangers, and the captain much wiser than his men, did not amuse himself with setting a mark upon the door, but attentively considered the house, counted the number of its windows, and passed by it very often to be certain that he should know it again.

He then returned to the forest and ordered his troop to go into the town, and buy nineteen mules and thirty-eight large jars, one full of oil and the rest empty.

In two or three days the jars were brought and all things in readiness, and the captain

having put a man into each jar, properly armed, the jars being rubbed on the outside with oil, and the covers having holes bored in them for the men to breathe through, loaded his mules, and in the habit of an oil merchant, entered the town in the dusk of the evening. He proceeded to the street where Ali Baba dwelt, and found him sitting in the porch of his house. "Sir," said he to Ali Baba, "I have brought this oil a great way to sell, and I am too late for this day's market, as I am a stranger in this town, will you do me the favour to let me put my mules into your court-yard, and direct me where I may lodge to night. Ali Baba, who was a good natured man, welcomed the pretended oil merchant very kindly, and offered him a bed in his own house; and having ordered the mules to be unloaded in the yard, and properly fed, he invited his guest into supper. The captain having seen the jars placed ready in the yard, followed Ali Baba into the house, and after supper, was shewn to the chamber, where he was to sleep.

It happened that Morgiana was obliged to sit up later that night than usual, to get ready her master's bathing linen for the following morning; and while she was busy about the fire, her lamp went out, and there was no more oil in the house.

After considering what she could possibly do for a light, she recollected the thirty-eight jars in the yard, and determined to take a little oil out of one of them for her lamp. She took her oil-pot in her hand, and approaching the first jar, the robber within said, "Is it time captain?" Any other slave, perhaps, on hearing a man in an oil jar, would have screamed out; but the prudent Morgiana instantly recollected herself and replied softly, No, not yet, lie still till I call you. She passed on to each of the jars, receiving the same question and giving the same answer, till she arrived at the last, which was full of oil.

Morgiana was now convinced that this was a plot of the robbers to murder her master Ali Baba; so she ran back to the kitchen, and brought out a large kettle, which she filled with oil, and 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 them.

Having done this, she put out her fire and lamp, and crept softly to her chamber.

The captain of the robbers hearing every thing quiet in the house, and perceiving no light any where, arose and went down into the yard to assemble his men. Coming to the first jar, he felt the steams of the boiling

oil; he ran hastily to the rest, and found every one of his troop put to death in the same manner. Full of rage and despair at having failed in his design, he forced the lock of a door that led to a garden, and made his escape over the walls.

On the following morning, Morgiana related to her master Ali Baba his wonderful deliverance from the pretended oil merchant and his gang of robbers. Ali Baba at first could scarcely credit her tale; but when he saw the robbers dead in the jars, he could not sufficiently praise her courage and sagacity; and without letting any one else into the secret, he and Morgiana, the next night, buried the thirty-seven thieves in a deep trench at the bottom of the garden. The jars and the mules as he had no use for them, were sent from time to time to the different markets and sold.

While Ali Baba took these measures to prevent the public from knowing how he came by his riches in so short a time, the captain of the forty robbers returned to the forest, in most inconceivable mortification; and in the agitation, or rather confusion, he was in at his success, so contrary to what he had promised himself, he entered the cave, not being able, all the way from the town, to come to any resolution what to do to Ali Baba.

The loneliness of the dark place seemed frightful to him. Where are you, my brave lads, cried he, old companions of my watchings, inroads, and labour? What can I do without you? Did I collect you to lose you by so base a fate, and so unworthy your courage? Had you died with your sabres in your hands, like brave men, my regret had been less! When shall I get so gallant a troop again? And if I could, can I undertake it without exposing so much gold and treasure to him, who hath already enriched himself out of it? I cannot, I ought not to think of it, before I have taken away his life. I will undertake that myself, which I could not accomplish with so powerful assistance: and when I have taken care to secure this treasure from being pillaged, I will provide for it new masters and successors after me, who shall preserve and augment it to all posterity. This resolution being taken, he was not at a loss how to execute it; but, easy in his mind, and full of hopes, he slept all that night very quietly.

When he waked early next morning as he had proposed, he dressed himself, agreeably to the project he had in his head, and went to the town, and took a lodging in a khan. And as he expected what had happened at Ali Baba's might make a great

noise in the town, he asked his host, by way of discourse, what news there were in the city. Upon which the innkeeper told him a great many things, which did not concern him in the least. He judged by this, that the reason why Ali Baba kept this affair so secret was for fear people should know where the treasure lay, and the means of coming at it; and because he knew his life would be sought upon account of it. And this urged him the more to neglect nothing to rid himself of so dangerous a person.

The next thing that the captain had to do was to provide himself with a horse, to convey a great many sorts of rich stuffs and fine linen to his lodging, which he did by a great many journeys to the forest, but with all the necessary precautions imaginable to conceal the place whence he brought them. In order to dispose of the merchandizes, when he had amassed them together, he took a furnished shop, which happened to be opposite to that which was Cassim's, which Ali Baba's son had not long occupied.

He took upon him the name of Cogia Houssain, and as a new comer, was, according to custom, extremely civil and complaisant to all the merchants his neighbours. And as Ali Baba's son was young and handsome, and a man of good sense, and

was often obliged to converse with Cogia Houssain, he soon made them acquainted with him. He strove to cultivate his friendship, more particularly when, two or three days after he was settled, he recognized Ali Baba, who came to see his son, and stopped to talk with him as he was accustomed to do; and when he was gone, he learnt from his son who he was. He increased his assiduities, caressed him after the most engaging manner, made him some small presents, and often asked him to dine and sup with him: and treated him very handsomely.

Ali Baba's son did not care to lie under such obligation to Cogia Houssian without making the like return; but was so much straitened for want of room in his house, that he could not entertain him so well as he wished: and therefore acquainted his father Ali Baba with his intention, and told him that it did not look well for him to receive such favours from Cogia Houssain without inviting him again.

Ali Baba, with great pleasure, took the seat upon himself. Son, said he, to-morrow (Friday) which is a day that the shops of such great merchants as Cogia Houssian and yourself are shut, get him to take a walk with you after dinner, and as you come back, pass by my door, and call in. It will look better to have it happen accident-

ally, than if you gave him a formal invitation. I will go and order Morgiana to provide a supper.

The next day, after dinner, Ali Baba's son and Cogia Houssian met by appointment, and took their walk, and as they returned, Ali Baba's son led Cogia Houssian through the street where his father lived; and when they came to the house, he stopped and knocked at the door. This, sir, said he, is my father's house; who upon the account I have given him of your friendship, charged me to procure him the honour of your acquaintance: and I desire you to add this pleasure to those I am already indebted to you for.

The artful Cogia Houssian would not too hastily accept this invitation, but pretended he was not fond of going into company, and that he had business which demanded his presence at home. These excuses only made Ali Baba's son the more eager to take him to his father's house, and after repeated solicitations, the merchant consented to sup at Ali Baba's the following evening.

A most excellent supper was provided, which Morgiana cooked in her best manner, as was her usual custom, she carried in the first dish herself. The moment she looked at Cogia Houssian, she knew him to be the pretended oil merchant. The prudent

Morgiana did not say a word to any one of this discovery, but sent the other slave into the kitchen, and waited at table herself; and while Cogia Houssian was drinking, she perceived he had a dagger under his coat. When supper was ended, and the desert and wines on the table, Morgiana went away and dressed herself in the habit of a dancing girl; she next called Abdalla, a faithful slave, to play on his tabor while she danced.

As soon as she appeared at the parlour door, her master who was very fond of seeing her dance, ordered her to come in and entertain the guest with some of her best dancing. Cogia Houssian was not very well satisfied with this entertainment, but was compelled, for fear of discovering himself, to seem pleased with the dancing, while in fact he wished Morgiana at the devil, and was quite alarmed lest he should lose his opportunity of murdering Ali Baba and his son.

Morgiana danced several dances with the utmost grace and agility, and then drawing a poinard from her girdle, she performed many surprising things with it, sometimes presenting the point to one, then at another and then seeming to strike it into her own bosom. Suddenly she paused, and holding the poinard in the right hand, held her left to her master, as if begging some money;

upon which Ali Baba and his son each gave her a small piece of money. She then turned to the pretended Cogia Houssian, and when he was putting his hand into his purse, she plunged the poinard into his heart.

Ali Baba and his son frightened at this action, cried out aloud. Unhappy wretch! exclaimed Ali Baba, what have you done to ruin me and my family? It was to preserve you, not to ruin you, answered Morgiana; I for see here said she (opening Cogia Houssian's garment, and showing the dagger), what an enemy you had entertained! Look well at him, and you will find him to be both the pretended oil merchant, and the captain of the gang of forty robbers: and what would you have more to persuade you of his wicked design? Before I saw him, I suspected him as soon as you told me you had such a guest. I saw him, and you now find that my suspicion was not groundless.

Ali Baba, who immediately felt the new obligation he had to Morgiana for saving his life a second time, embraced her: Morgiana, said he, I gave you your liberty, and then promised you that my gratitude should not stop there, but that I would soon complete it. The time is come for me to give you a proof of it, by making you my

daughter-in-law. Then addressing himself to his son, he said to him, I believe you, son, to be so dutiful a child, that you will not refuse Morgiana for your wife. You see that Cogia Houssian sought your friendship with a treacherous design to take away my life; and, if he had succeeded, there is no doubt but he would have sacrificed you also to his revenge. Consider, that by marrying Morgiana, you marry the support of my family, and your own.

The son, far from shewing any dislike, readily consented to the marriage; not only because he would not disobey his father, but that his inclination prompted him to it.

After this, they thought of burying the captain of the robbers with his comrades, and did it so privately that nobody knew any thing of it till a great many years after, when not any one had any concern in the publication of this remarkable history.

A few days afterwards, Ali Baba celebrated the marriage of his son and Morgiana, with a sumptuous entertainment; and every one who knew Morgiana, said she was worthy of her good fortune, and highly commended her master's generosity towards her.

During a twelve-month Ali Baba forbore to go near the forest, but at length his

curiosity excited him to make another journey. When he came to the cave, he saw no footsteps of either men or horses; and having said Open Sesame, he went in, and judged by the state of things deposited in the cavern, that no one had been there since the pretended Cogia Houssian had removed the merchandise to his shop, in the city. Ali Baba took as much gold home as his horse could carry; and afterwards he carried his son to the cave, and taught him the secret. This secret they handed down to their posterity, and, using their good fortune with moderation, they lived in honour and splendour, and served with dignity some of the highest offices of the state.

