

## THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS



*The Thousand and One Nights* is undoubtedly the most famous work of Arabic prose known to the Western world. Even people who have never heard its name are familiar with many of its tales, which have become part of the large collection of stories that are an important part of most people's childhood. Who has not heard of the voyages of Sindbad the Sailor, or of Aladdin and his magic lamp? These are just two of the many stories contained in this massive book.

*The Thousand and One Nights* is actually not just one story. Rather, it is a collection of different tales loosely pieced together into one long narrative. The framework that connects all the various tales is the story of the woman-hating King Shahriyar, who marries a different woman each night and puts her to death each morning. To delay her execution, Princess Shaharazad (sometimes spelled Scheherazade) tells him a story each night but withholds its ending until the next day. The tales go on for a thousand and one nights (hence the name of the book). By the time Princess Shaharazad has finished telling her tale, almost three years have passed and King Shahriyar has fallen in love with her and as a result decides not to execute her.

There probably never was a real King Shahri-

yar or Princess Shaharazad. Nor is there a single author who wrote all of *The Thousand and One Nights*. The Arabic book known by this name today is based on an ancient Persian storybook called the *Hazar Afsaneh* (*The Thousand Tales*). This book was translated into Arabic around the year A.D. 850. It was then that the book came to be known as *The Thousand and One Nights*. Following its translation, the book quickly became popular in many Arabic lands. Often, people would gather around professional storytellers in marketplaces and coffeehouses to hear these fantastic tales. Over the years the storytellers embellished the original collection of tales, adding to them many new stories they had invented or heard from other sources. They also changed the names of the people and places, as well as some other details. Consequently, under the influence of these storytellers, *The Thousand and One Nights* was transformed into a genuinely Arabic collection of stories.

Because of the great changes that occurred over time, three different strands of *The Thousand and One Nights* can be identified. The first is the original Persian book and its accompanying framework. This strand is now difficult to distinguish, however, though it is still obvious that certain stories originated from Persian folklore. The story of Princess Shaharazad, which forms the fragile string that loosely connects all the tales in the book, belongs to this strand.

The second strand is set in the Arabic city of Baghdad (now the capital of Iraq) and focuses on the reign of King Harun ar-Rashid. Among the stories included in this strand are the tales of Sindbad and Aladdin. The final strand consists of many short humorous tales that originated in the city of Cairo (now the capital of Egypt). All these strands and the stories they involve are now woven together like a tapestry, so that readers find themselves reading stories within stories, with characters in one tale becoming the narrators of the next one.

# GUIDE FOR INTERPRETING

## *from The Thousand and One Nights*

### Commentary

**Folk Tales.** Folk tales are stories that were originally handed down orally among the common people of a particular culture. Because they are intended for a general audience, they are told in simple language that can be understood by virtually anyone, regardless of the level of education. Often, these stories relate events that are unrealistic or unlikely to happen in the real world in order to teach a lesson or express a general truth about life. In addition, the characters in folk tales tend to be stereotypes or stock characters embodying a single human trait, quality, or emotion. For example, a character in a folk tale may embody envy or greed.

During the course of history, folk tales have often been transmitted from one culture to another and eventually assimilated into the traditions of the new culture. Yet on the basis of plot and other details, it is usually possible to identify when a folk tale has been adopted from another culture. *The Thousand and One Nights* is a perfect example of the merging of a number of folk traditions. It includes many stories that were originally Persian but have been transformed into Arabic tales, along with many other tales that are of Arabic origin. It is also likely that some of the Persian stories are themselves variations of earlier Indian folk tales. "The Fisherman and the Jinnee," for example, is one of the simplest and oldest tales in *The Thousand and One Nights* and may indeed have originally been an Indian folk tale.

### Writing

We have all heard stories about jinnees or seen them on television or in the movies. How do you envision a typical jinnee? What would the jinnee look like? What would cause it to appear? How would it act? Write a journal entry in which you respond to these questions.

### Primary Source

*The Thousand and One Nights* (also known as *The Arabian Nights*) has had a tremendous impact on Westerners. Patricia Barrett Perkins comments on its power to bridge the cultural gap between East and West in her foreword to the tales: "Only a generation or two ago, reading *The Arabian Nights* provided a magic carpet ride to a land and a people most of us would never see or know. Today, when one reads the stories, we not only enter this fascinating and exotic world, but also are better able to understand a land and people who are as close as our television sets. What better way to breach the cultural gap than through their literature?"

# From The Thousand and One Nights

## The Fisherman and the Jinnee

translated by N. J. Dawood

Once upon a time there was a poor fisherman who had a wife and three children to support.

He used to cast his net four times a day. It happened that one day he went down to the sea at dawn and, reaching the shore, set down his basket, rolled up his shirt sleeves, and cast his net far out into the water. After he had waited for it to sink, he pulled on the cords with all his might; but the net was so heavy that he could not draw it in. So he tied the rope ends to a wooden stake on the beach and, putting off his clothes, dived into the water and set to work to bring it up. When he had carried it ashore, however, he found in it a dead donkey.

"By Allah,<sup>1</sup> this is a strange catch!" cried the fisherman, disgusted at the sight. After he had freed the net and wrung it out, he waded into the water and cast it again, invoking Allah's help. But when he tried to draw it in he found it even heavier than before. Thinking that he had caught some enormous fish, he fastened the ropes to the stake and, diving in again, brought up the net. This time he found a large earthen vessel filled with mud and sand.

Angrily the fisherman threw away the vessel, cleaned his net, and cast it for the third time. He waited patiently, and when he felt the net grow heavy he hauled it in, only to find it filled with bones and broken glass. In despair, he lifted his

eyes to heaven and cried: "Allah knows that I cast my net only four times a day. I have already cast it for the third time and caught no fish at all. Surely He will not fail me again!"

With this the fisherman hurled his net far out into the sea and waited for it to sink to the bottom. When at length he brought it to land he found in it a bottle made of yellow copper. The mouth was stopped with lead and bore the seal of our master Solomon, son of David.<sup>2</sup> The fisherman rejoiced and said: "I will sell this in the market of the coppersmiths. It must be worth ten pieces of gold." He shook the bottle and, finding it heavy, thought to himself: "I will first break the seal and find out what is inside."

The fisherman removed the lead with his knife and again shook the bottle; but scarcely had he done so when there burst from it a great column of smoke which spread along the shore and rose so high that it almost touched the heavens. Taking shape, the smoke resolved itself into a jinnee of such prodigious<sup>3</sup> stature that his head reached the clouds, while his feet were planted on the sand. His head was a huge dome and his mouth as wide as a cavern, with teeth ragged like broken rocks. His

2. **Solomon . . . David:** In the Old Testament, David and his son Solomon are both great Kings of Israel and are considered prophets by Muslims.

3. **prodigious** (prə dij' əs) *n.*: Wonderful; amazing.

legs towered like the were two inverted bow torches, made his aspect

The sight of this fisherman's heart; his chattered together, ar ground with parched to

"There is no god His Prophet!" cried th himself to the fishern mighty Prophet, do r again to defy your will

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"What news?" asked "News of your dea replied the jinnee.

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"Know," began the the rebel jinn who, toget mutinied against Solomor sent against me his vizier, vanquished me despite m led me captive before h

4. **vizier** (vi zir'): A high office minister.

1. **Allah** (al' lā): The Arabic word for God.

legs towered like the masts of a ship, his nostrils were two inverted bowls, and his eyes, blazing like torches, made his aspect fierce and menacing.

The sight of this jinnee struck terror to the fisherman's heart; his limbs quivered, his teeth chattered together, and he stood rooted to the ground with parched tongue and staring eyes.

"There is no god but Allah and Solomon is His Prophet!" cried the jinnee. Then, addressing himself to the fisherman, he said: "I pray you, mighty Prophet, do not kill me! I swear never again to defy your will or violate your laws!"

"Blasphemous giant," cried the fisherman, "do you presume to call Solomon the Prophet of Allah? Solomon has been dead these eighteen hundred years, and we are now approaching the end of time. But what is your history, pray, and how came you to be imprisoned in this bottle?"

On hearing these words the jinnee replied sarcastically: "Well, then; there is no god but Allah! Fisherman, I bring you good news."

"What news?" asked the old man.

"News of your death, horrible and prompt!" replied the jinnee.

"Then may heaven's wrath be upon you, ungrateful wretch!" cried the fisherman. "Why do you wish my death, and what have I done to deserve it? Have I not brought you up from the depths of the sea and released you from your imprisonment?"

But the jinnee answered: "Choose the manner of your death and the way that I shall kill you. Come, waste no time!"

"But what crime have I committed?" cried the fisherman.

"Listen to my story, and you shall know," replied the jinnee.

"Be brief, then, I pray you," said the fisherman, "for you have wrung my soul with terror."

"Know," began the giant, "that I am one of the rebel jinn who, together with Sakhr the Jinnee, mutinied against Solomon, son of David. Solomon sent against me his vizier,<sup>4</sup> Asaf ben Berakhya, who vanquished me despite my supernatural power and led me captive before his master. Invoking the

4. vizier (vi zir'): A high officer in the government; a minister.



ILLUSTRATION FOR *AKABIAN NIGHTS* FOR  
"THE FISHERMAN AND THE GENIE (JINNEE)"  
Edmund Dulac  
New York Public Library

name of Allah, Solomon adjured me to embrace his faith and pledge him absolute obedience. I refused, and he imprisoned me in this bottle, upon which he set a seal of lead bearing the Name of the Most High. Then he sent for several of his faithful jinn, who carried me away and cast me into the middle of the sea. In the ocean depths I vowed; 'I will bestow eternal riches on him who sets me free!' But a hundred years passed away and no one freed me. In the second hundred years of my imprisonment I said: 'For him who frees me I will open up the buried treasures of the earth!' And yet no one freed me. Whereupon I flew into a rage and swore: 'I

will kill the man who sets me free, allowing him only to choose the manner of his death!' Now it was you who set me free; therefore prepare to die and choose the way that I shall kill you."

"O wretched luck, that it should have fallen on my lot to free you!" exclaimed the fisherman. "Spare me, mighty jinnee, and Allah will spare you; kill me, and so shall Allah destroy you!"

"You have freed me," repeated the jinnee. "Therefore you must die."

"Chief of the jinn," cried the fisherman, "will you thus requite<sup>5</sup> good with evil?"

"Enough of this talk!" roared the jinnee. "Kill you I must."

At this point the fisherman thought to himself: "Though I am but a man and he is a jinnee, my cunning may yet overreach his malice." Then, turning to his adversary, he said: "Before you kill me, I beg you in the Name of the Most High engraved on Solomon's seal to answer me one question truthfully."

The jinnee trembled at the mention of the Name, and, when he had promised to answer truthfully, the fisherman asked: "How could this bottle, which is scarcely large enough to hold your hand or foot, ever contain your entire body?"

"Do you dare doubt that?" roared the jinnee indignantly.

"I will never believe it," replied the fisherman, "until I see you enter this bottle with my own eyes!"

Upon this the jinnee trembled from head to foot and dissolved into a column of smoke, which gradually wound itself into the bottle and disappeared inside. At once the fisherman snatched up the leaden stopper and thrust it into the mouth of the bottle. Then he called out to the jinnee: "Choose the manner of your death and the way that I shall kill you! By Allah, I will throw you back into the sea, and keep watch on this shore to warn all men of your treachery!"

When he heard the fisherman's words, the jinnee struggled desperately to escape from the bottle, but was prevented by the magic seal. He now altered his tone and, assuming a submissive air, as-

5. **requite** (ri kwit') *n.*: To make return or repayment for.

sured the fisherman that he had been jesting with him and implored him to let him out. But the fisherman paid no heed to the jinnee's entreaties<sup>6</sup> and resolutely carried the bottle down to the sea. "What are you doing with me?" whimpered the jinnee helplessly.

"I am going to throw you back into the sea!" replied the fisherman. "You have lain in the depths eighteen hundred years, and there you shall remain till the Last Judgment!<sup>7</sup> Did I not beg you to spare me so that Allah might spare you? But you took no pity on me, and He has now delivered you into my hands."

"Let me out," cried the jinnee in despair, "and I will give you fabulous riches!"

"Perfidious<sup>8</sup> jinnee," retorted the fisherman, "you justly deserve the fate of the king in the tale of Yunan and the doctor.

"What tale is that?" asked the jinnee.

#### THE TALE OF KING YUNAN AND DUBAN THE DOCTOR

It is related (began the fisherman) that once upon a time there reigned in the land of Persia a rich and mighty king called Yunan. He commanded great armies and had a numerous retinue of followers and courtiers. But he was afflicted with a leprosy<sup>9</sup> which baffled his physicians and defied all cures.

One day a venerable<sup>10</sup> old doctor named Duban came to the king's capital. He had studied books written in Greek, Persian, Latin, Arabic, and Syriac, and was deeply versed in the wisdom of the ancients. He was master of many sciences, knew the properties of plants and herbs, and was above all skilled in astrology and medicine. When this physician heard of the leprosy with which Allah had plagued the king and of his doctors' vain endeavors

6. **entreaties** (en trēt' ēz) *n.*: Earnest requests.

7. **Last Judgment**: The final judgment of humankind at the end of the world.

8. **perfidious** (pər fid' ē əs) *adj.*: Treacherous.

9. **leprosy** (lep' rə sē) *n.*: A chronic infectious disease that attacks the skin, flesh, and nerves.

10. **venerable** (ven' ə r ə b'l) *adj.*: Worthy of respect by reason of age and dignity or character.

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to cure him, he put on his finest robes and betook himself to the royal palace. After he had kissed the ground before the king and called down blessings upon him, he told him who he was and said: "Great king, I have heard about the illness with which you are afflicted and have come to heal you. Yet will I give you no potion to drink, nor any ointment to rub upon your body."

The king was astonished at the doctor's words and asked: "How will you do that? By Allah, if you cure me I will heap riches upon you, and your children's children after you. Anything you wish for shall be yours and you shall be my companion and my friend."

Then the king gave him a robe of honor and other presents and asked: "Is it really true that you can heal me without draught or ointment? When is it to be? What day, what hour?"

"Tomorrow, if the king wishes," he replied.

The doctor took leave of the king, and hastening to the center of the town rented for himself a house, to which he carried his books, his drugs, and his other medicaments. Then he distilled balsams and elixirs,<sup>11</sup> and these he poured into a hollow polo stick.

Next morning he went to the royal palace and, kissing the ground before the king, requested him to ride to the field and play a game of polo with his friends. The king rode out with his viziers and his chamberlains,<sup>12</sup> and when he had entered the playing field the doctor handed him the hollow club and said: "Take this and grasp it firmly. Strike the ball with all your might until the palm of your hand and the rest of your body begin to perspire. The cure will penetrate your palm and course through the veins and arteries of your body. When it has done its work, return to the palace, wash yourself, and go to sleep. Thus shall you be cured; and peace be with you."

The king took hold of the club and, gripping it firmly, struck the ball and galloped after it with the other players. Harder and harder he struck the ball

as he dashed up and down the field, until his palm and all his body perspired. When the doctor saw that the cure had begun its work, he ordered the king to return to the palace. The slaves hastened to make ready the royal bath and hurried to prepare the linens and the towels. The king bathed, put on his nightclothes, and went to sleep.

Next morning the physician went to the palace. When he was admitted to the king's presence he kissed the ground before him and wished him peace. The king hastily rose to receive him; he threw his arms around his neck and seated him by his side.

For when the king left the bath the previous evening, he looked upon his body and rejoiced to find no trace of the leprosy. His skin had become as pure as virgin silver.

The king regaled the physician sumptuously all day. He bestowed on him robes of honor and other gifts, and when evening came gave him two thousand pieces of gold and mounted him on his own favorite horse. And so enraptured was the king by the consummate skill of his doctor that he kept repeating to himself: "This wise physician has cured me without draught or ointment. By Allah, I will load him with honors and he shall henceforth be my companion and trusted friend." And that night the king lay down to sleep in perfect bliss, knowing that he was clean in body and rid at last of his disease.

Next morning, as soon as the king sat down upon his throne, with the officers of his court standing before him and his lieutenants and viziers seated on his right and left, he called for the physician, who went up to him and kissed the ground before him. The king rose and seated the doctor by his side. He feasted him all day, gave him a thousand pieces of gold and more robes of honor, and conversed with him till nightfall.

Now among the king's viziers there was a man of repellent aspect, an envious, black-souled villain, full of spite and cunning. When this vizier saw that the king had made the physician his friend and lavished on him high dignities and favors, he became jealous and began to plot the doctor's downfall. Does not the proverb say: "All men envy, the strong openly, the weak in secret?"

11. **balsams** (bôl' sãmz) and **elixirs** (i lik' sãrz): Two potions with supposed healing powers.

12. **chamberlains** (chãm' bõr linz) *n.*: High officials in the king's court.

So, on the following day, when the king entered the council chamber and was about to call for the physician, the vizier kissed the ground before him and said: "My bounteous master, whose munificence extends to all men, my duty prompts me to forewarn you against an evil which threatens your life; nor would I be anything but a base-born wretch were I to conceal it from you."

Perturbed at these ominous words, the king ordered him to explain his meaning.

"Your majesty," resumed the vizier, "there is an old proverb which says: 'He who does not weigh the consequences of his acts shall never prosper.' Now I have seen the king bestow favors and shower honors upon his enemy, on an assassin who cunningly seeks to destroy him. I fear for the king's safety."

"Who is this man whom you suppose to be my enemy?" asked the king, turning pale.

"If you are asleep, your majesty," replied the vizier, "I beg you to awake. I speak of Duban, the doctor."

"He is my friend," replied the king angrily, "dearer to me than all my courtiers; for he has cured me of my leprosy, an evil which my physicians had failed to remove. Surely there is no other physician like him in the whole world, from East to West. How can you say these monstrous things of him? From this day I will appoint him my personal physician and give him every month a thousand pieces of gold. Were I to bestow on him the half of my kingdom, it would be but a small reward for his service. Your counsel, my vizier, is the prompting of jealousy and envy. Would you have me kill my benefactor and repent of my rashness, as King Sindbad repented after he had killed his falcon?"

#### THE TALE OF KING SINDBAD AND THE FALCON

Once upon a time (went on King Yunan) there was a Persian king who was a great lover of riding and hunting. He had a falcon which he himself had trained with loving care and which never left his side for a moment; for even at nighttime he carried it perched upon his fist, and when he went hunting took it with him. Hanging from the bird's neck was a little bowl of gold from which it drank. One day the king ordered his men to make ready for a

hunting expedition and, taking with him his falcon, rode out with his courtiers. At length they came to a valley where they laid the hunting nets. Presently a gazelle fell into the snare, and the king said: "I will kill the man who lets her escape!"

They drew the nets closer and closer round the beast. On seeing the king the gazelle stood on her haunches and raised her forelegs to her head as if she wished to salute him. But as he bent forward to lay hold of her, she leaped over his head and fled across the field. Looking round, the king saw his courtiers winking at one another.

"Why are they winking?" he asked his vizier.

"Perhaps because you let the beast escape," ventured the other, smiling.

"On my life," cried the king, "I will chase the gazelle and bring her back!"

At once he galloped off in pursuit of the fleeing animal, and when he had caught up with her, his falcon swooped upon the gazelle, blinding her with his beak, and the king struck her down with a blow of his sword. Then dismounting he flayed the animal and hung the carcass on his saddle-bow.

It was a hot day and the king, who by this time had become faint with thirst, went to search for water. Presently, however, he saw a huge tree, down the trunk of which water was trickling in great drops. He took the little bowl from the falcon's neck and, filling it with this water, placed it before the bird. But the falcon knocked the bowl with its beak and toppled it over. The king once again filled the bowl and placed it before the falcon, but the bird knocked it over a second time. Upon this the king became very angry and, filling the bowl a third time, set it down before his horse. But the falcon sprang forward and knocked it over with its wings.

"Allah curse you for a bird of ill omen!" cried the king. "You have prevented yourself from drinking and the horse also."

So saying, he struck the falcon with his sword and cut off both its wings. But the bird lifted its head as if to say: "Look into the tree!" The king raised his eyes and saw in the tree an enormous serpent spitting its venom down the trunk.

The king was deeply grieved at what he had done and, mounting his horse, hurried back to the

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palace. He threw his kill to the cook, and no sooner had he sat down, with the falcon still perched on his fist, than the bird gave a convulsive gasp and dropped down dead.

The king was stricken with sorrow and remorse for having so rashly killed the bird which had saved his life.

When the vizier heard the tale of King Yunan, he said: "I assure your majesty that my counsel is prompted by no other motive than my devotion to you and my concern for your safety. I beg leave to warn you that, if you put your trust in this physician, it is certain that he will destroy you. Has he not cured you by a device held in the hand? And might he not cause your death by another such device?"

"You have spoken wisely, my faithful vizier," replied the king. "Indeed, it is quite probable that this physician has come to my court as a spy to destroy me. And since he cured my illness by a thing held in the hand, he might as cunningly poison me with the scent of a perfume. What should I do, my vizier?"

"Send for him at once," replied the other, "and when he comes, strike off his head. Only thus shall you be secure from his perfidy."

Thereupon the king sent for the doctor, who hastened to the palace with a joyful heart, not knowing what lay in store for him.

"Do you know why I have sent for you?" asked the king.

"Allah alone knows the unspoken thoughts of men," replied the physician.

"I have brought you here to kill you," said the king.

The physician was thunderstruck at these words and cried: "But why should you wish to kill me? What crime have I committed?"

"It has come to my knowledge," replied the king, "that you are a spy sent here to cause my death. But you shall be the first to die."

Then he called out to the executioner, saying: "Strike off the head of this traitor!"

"Spare me, and Allah will spare you!" cried the unfortunate doctor. "Kill me, and so shall Allah kill you!"



**A royal hunting expedition. Charge of the Faramourz cavaliers, mid-fourteenth century**  
*Musée Reza Abbasi, Teheran, Iran*

But the king gave no heed to his entreaties. "Never will I have peace again," he cried, "until I see you dead. For if you cured me by a thing held in the hand, you will doubtless kill me by the scent of a perfume or by some other foul device."

"Is it thus that you repay me?" asked the doctor. "Will you thus requite good with evil?"

But the king said: "You must die; nothing can now save you."

When he saw that the king was determined to put him to death, the physician wept and bitterly repented the service he had done him. Then the executioner came forward, blindfolded the doctor and, drawing his sword, held it in readiness for the king's signal. But the doctor continued to wail, crying: "Spare me, and Allah will spare you! Kill me, and so shall Allah kill you!"



Moved by the old man's lamentations, one of the courtiers interceded for him with the king, saying: "Spare the life of this man, I pray you. He has committed no crime against you, but rather has he cured you of an illness which your physicians have failed to remedy."

"If I spare this doctor," replied the king, "he will use his devilish art to kill me. Therefore he must die."

Again the doctor cried: "Spare me, and Allah will spare you! Kill me, and so shall Allah kill you!" But when at last he saw that the king was fixed in his resolve, he said: "Your majesty, if you needs must kill me, I beg you to grant me a day's delay, so that I may go to my house and wind up my affairs. I wish to say farewell to my family and my neighbors and instruct them to arrange for my burial. I must also give away my books of medicine, of which there is one, a work of unparalleled virtue, which I would offer to you as a parting gift, that you may preserve it among the treasures of your kingdom."

"What may this book be?" asked the king.

"It holds secrets and devices without number, the least of them being this: that if, after you have struck off my head, you turn over three leaves of this book and read the first three lines upon the left-hand page, my severed head will speak and answer any questions you may ask it."

The king was astonished to hear this and at once ordered his guards to escort the physician to his house. That day the doctor put his affairs in order and next morning returned to the king's palace. There had already assembled the viziers, the chamberlains, the nabobs,<sup>13</sup> and all the chief offi-

13. **nabobs** (nā' bābz) *n.*: Very rich or important people; aristocrats.

cers of the realm, so that with their colored robes the court seemed like a garden full of flowers.

The doctor bowed low before the king; in one hand he had an ancient book and in the other a little bowl filled with a strange powder. Then he sat down and said: "Bring me a platter!" A platter was instantly brought in, and the doctor sprinkled the powder on it, smoothing it over with his fingers. After that he handed the book to the king and said: "Take this book and set it down before you. When my head has been cut off, place it upon the powder to stanch the bleeding. Then open the book."

The king ordered the executioner to behead the physician. He did so. Then the king opened the book, and, finding the pages stuck together, put his finger to his mouth and turned over the first leaf. After much difficulty he turned over the second and the third, moistening his finger with his spittle at every page, and tried to read. But he could find no writing there.

"There is nothing written in this book," cried the king.

"Go on turning," replied the severed head.

The king had not turned six pages when the venom (for the leaves of the book were poisoned) began to work in his body. He fell backward in an agony of pain, crying: "Poisoned! Poisoned!" and in a few moments breathed his last.

"Now, treacherous jinnee," continued the fisherman, "had the king spared the physician, he in turn would have been spared by Allah. But he refused, and Allah brought about the king's destruction. And as for you, if you had been willing to spare me, Allah would have been merciful to you, and I would have spared your life. But you sought to kill me; therefore I will throw you back into the sea and leave you to perish in this bottle!"

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**Reader's Response** *What is your reaction to the use of the technique of telling tales within tales? Do you find this technique confusing? Why or why not?*

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## THINK

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