



A poor man of Baghdad rests by the gates of a fabulously wealthy merchant. He is invited in by the owner and discovers that they share the same name – Sinbad. The wealthy Sinbad relates how he made his fortune in seven adventures at sea.

Adapted by Bertie

Read by Elizabeth Donnelly

Proofread by Jana Elizabeth

*This is Elizabeth, and I am here with a story from **1001 Nights**, that was originally*

*told by the storyteller **Scheherazade** to her master the Sultan (**Shahryar**).*

The First Voyage of Sinbad

Long ago, in the city of Baghdad, there lived a man named Sinbad the Hammál (porter). He made his living by lugging around heavy objects on his head. In short, he was a porter, as hard working, as he was poor. One exceedingly hot and dusty day, he was weary and sweating, and not sure if the heat or his load was causing him the most trouble. He staggered past the entrance of a wealthy merchant's house. The sight of a bench by the gates was so tempting, that he could not resist setting down his load, and

sitting down for a while. As he rested, he felt a pleasant breeze and heard the sound of a lute playing and light voices full of laughter and song. He stood up and pushed the gates open slightly. As he peered through them, he saw a garden full of flowers, and servants carrying all sorts of rich and delicate meats. The delicious aroma greeted his nostrils and filled him with hunger. As he stood there, he recited some lines:

*“Each morning that dawns, I awake in pain and woe.
I pick up my load and off to work I go,
while others live in comfort and delight,
with pretty songs, good food, and laughter light.
All living things were born in their birthday suits,
but some live like Lords and others like brutes.
At Thee, O God all-wise! I dare not to rail,
whose creation is just and whose justice cannot fail.”*

When Sinbad the Porter had finished his verse, he picked up his heavy crate and started to move off. Just as he put one foot forward, there came from the gate a little servant boy who tugged at his sleeve and said:

“Step inside, my Lord wishes to meet you.” The porter tried to make excuses, but the boy would have none of them, and eventually they went through the gate together. They walked through a majestic house to the grand dining room that was full of Lords sitting at tables laden with rich food and drink. The sound of music and laughter and lovely slave girls playing and singing filled the air. The diners were seated according to rank. At the head of them all sat a man of worshipful and noble appearance. Sinbad the Porter was so overwhelmed by all what he saw that he said to himself, “by Allah, this must be either a piece of paradise or some king’s palace!” He bowed down and kissed the ground. The master of the house

bid him to stand up. Servants placed food before him and the porter, after saying his Bismillah (By the name of God), ate his fill, after which he exclaimed: "Praised be Allah for your generosity my Lord." His host replied, "you are most welcome and may your day be blessed, but tell me, what is your name and what do you do all day?"

"O my Lord, my name is Sinbad the Hammal, and I carry folk's goods on my head for hire."

The master of the house smiled and said:

"You should know, oh porter, that you and I have something important in common - our name! For I am Sinbad the Sailor. Now if you will be so kind, let me hear those verses that you recited outside the gate of my house."

The porter blushed, because he did not wish to repeat the lines about injustice among such wealthy and fortunate company.

“By Allah excuse me!” he exclaimed. “Poverty and hardship have given me boorish ways!”

“Tish Tish, do not be ashamed,” said the Lord. “Say them again, for they pleased me when I heard you speak them at the gate.”

The porter duly recited the lines and the merchant slapped his back affectionately and said, “no one ever spoke a truer word, but you should know that I, myself, only rose to this happy state that you see all around you after long suffering and woe. I made seven voyages at sea, and by each of them hangs a marvelous tale that is almost beyond belief. If you have time, I shall tell you the first of these tales so that you can better understand what pain I endured in my early days. All this happened because of fate, for no one can escape destiny.”

And this is the tale of the first voyage of Sinbad the Sailor.

My father was a merchant, a successful man of trade, who left me no short of wealth and comfort. I was young, and headstrong, and foolish, and I ate, drank, and played thinking that I would continue that way for all my days. Then one day, I awoke and found that the money was almost gone. Then I remembered my father and how he used to say, "a grave is better than poverty." And so, I came to my senses. I sold my fine clothes, my property, and my playthings. With my last 3000 dirhams I bought merchandise for a sea voyage. As I boarded the ship with my fellow merchants, I said out loud the lines, "he who seeks fame without toil and strife, the impossible seeks and wastes his life."

We set sail for Basra, the city whose name means "where many ways come together. We journeyed for many days and nights, touching in at ports and

islands. Everywhere we landed, we bought and sold, bartered and traded, increasing our wealth bit by bit.

Eventually we came to the most beautiful island of all. Here some seeds from the gardens of paradise must have landed and taken root. The captain dropped anchor and put down the landing planks. Everyone on board came ashore to feel the golden sand between their toes and enjoy the lush and tranquil land. Some passengers set up fires for cooking while others washed their clothes. A few of us contented ourselves with walking around the island, and others drank and played. Then all of a sudden, the captain, standing high up on the deck, rang the ship's bell and shouted at the top of his voice, "everyone run for your lives. May Allah preserve you! Drop your gear and get back to the ship as fast as you can."

We looked up in astonishment, and as we did so we felt the ground heaving and hoeing under our feet. The formally calm sea swirled around the island and great waves broke against the shore. Then the very centre of the island curled up in a great ark, and those who had not made it back to the ship began to slide down into the foaming sea-water. I was among them, but as I fell headlong, I grabbed hold of a wooden trough for washing clothes. This saved my life, for when I found myself in the raging water, I clambered onto it. For a while, the waves tossed me to and fro, as I sat astride my make-shift life-boat, but I managed to stay afloat. I now saw that we had not landed on an island as we had thought, but on the back of an enormous whale. Somehow, sand had settled on him, and trees and vegetation had grown on his back. He must have lain still for many a year, but when we landed on him, and some of us started fires, that must have annoyed him and woken him

from his sleep. He flipped his tail and thrashed the water, and a great wave picked me up and washed me further away. Now I was truly on my own, with no chance of being picked up by the ship. Night fell and I prepared to meet my doom. But the morning brought me to the shore of a high-hilled island. I scrambled ashore, where I found my legs were cramped and my feet numb. I fell on to the ground like a dead man and lay for a long time with my eyes closed. It was some time before I began to crawl on my hands and knees towards the edge of the woods, where I found nuts, berries and reviving spring water. Feeling somewhat better, I began to explore the island, and found it to be a pleasant one. After walking sometime I caught the outline of a living thing - drawing closer I saw it to be a beautiful and noble horse, tethered on the beach. I stooped down and picked a clutch of long grass, still wet with the morning dew, and took it to the horse that was a

gentle and lovely mare. She nibbled it out of the palm of my hand. Then all of a sudden, something startled her. She neighed and pulled at her rope. Looking round, I saw, emerging from the waves, a giant horse - a White Sea stallion - that was coming for the mare. I was as startled as the mare by this impossible creature, and I ran back for cover of the woods. From there, I saw that the stallion had taken the mare's rope in his mouth and was dragging her into the sea where she would surely drown. This sight filled my heart with pity. I picked up a stick and ran back to the beach where I began to beat the sea-stallion around the head. He might surely have turned and kicked me to death, but so furious was my attack that he thought better of it and ran back into the waves from where he had come.

The mare was still frisking to and fro with fright, but I took the rope and calmed her down. A few minutes later I was joined on the beach by a man

who called out to me, "who are you and where are you from?"

"My Lord," I replied. "I am Sinbad the Sailor, whose ship landed on the back of a great whale, and who would have drowned had not Allah preserved me and sent me a wooden trough, clinging to which I was washed ashore here on this lovely island. And now I have told you who I am, please return the favour and tell me who you are."

He replied, "I am one of the king's grooms, and I look after his favourite mare whom you just saved from being dragged into the sea and drowned by the sea-stallion."

And this encounter proved to be my great fortune, for the groom led me to the capital city and the palace. Here I had the honour of meeting King Mihrjan and when I had told him my story he marvelled and said,

“by Allah you have indeed been miraculously preserved! The fates must have decreed a long life for you, or you would have surely been drowned a thousand times over. You are one who is blessed by Allah your safety.”

Believing me to be favoured by God, he treated me kindly. Indeed, he gave me a lucrative job as master of his port and registrar of all the ships that were put in there. One day, the very same ship that I had sailed in visited the island. The captain immediately recognised me and embraced me in his arms.

“Your goods are still safe in the hull of my ship,” he said.

This was the most unexpected good news, thanks be to Allah. I offered the goods as a gift to King Mihrjan who had shown me such good favour. In return, he made me a gift of treasure that was worth twenty times its value. We sailed to Basra

where I increased the value of my goods another tenfold in the market place. And so, I returned to Baghdad as a wealthy man. I bought this palace and many servants, set up a great establishment, and soon began to forget all that I had suffered. This then is my first miraculous story. Tomorrow I shall tell you the tale of my second of seven voyages, if you will return to my house.”

And so saying, Sinbad the Sailor gave Sinbad the Porter 100 gold coins for his time, and the porter left for his humble home, pondering his great good fortune.

And that was the story of the first Voyage of Sinbad the Sailor. I will be back at Storynory.com to relate to you more of the marvellous adventures of Sinbad. For now, from me, Elizabeth, goodbye.