

The Story of the Merchant and the Genie

Once upon a time a merchant who possessed great wealth, in land and merchandise, as well as in ready money. One day, having to go a long way from home, he mounted his horse, taking with him a small wallet in which he had put a few biscuits and dates, because he had to pass through the desert where no food was to be got. He arrived without any mishap, and, having finished his business, set out on his return. On the fourth day of his journey, the heat of the sun being very great, he turned out of his road to rest under some trees. He found at the foot of a large walnut-tree a fountain of clear and running water. He dismounted, fastened his horse to a branch of the tree, and sat by the fountain, after having taken from his wallet some of his dates and biscuits. When he had finished this frugal meal he washed his face and hands in the fountain.



The enchanted palace opened, and made a passage for the genie.

When he was thus employed he saw an enormous Genie, white with rage, coming towards him, with a scimitar in his hand.

"Arise," he cried in a terrible voice, "and let me kill you as you have killed my son!"

As he uttered these words he gave a frightful yell. The merchant, quite as much terrified at the hideous face of the monster as at his words, answered him tremblingly, "Alas, good sir, what can I have done to you to deserve death?"

"I shall kill you," repeated the Genie, "as you have killed my son."

"But," said the merchant, "How can I have killed your son? I do not know him, and I have never even seen him."

"When you arrived here did you not sit down on the ground?" asked the Genie, "and did you not take some dates from your wallet, and whilst eating them did not you throw the stones about?"

"Yes," said the merchant, "I certainly did so."

"Then," said the Genie, "I tell you you have killed my son, for whilst you were throwing about the stones, my son passed by, and one of them struck him in the eye and killed him. So I shall kill you."

"Ah, sir, forgive me!" cried the merchant.

"I will have no mercy on you," answered the Genie.

"But I killed your son quite unintentionally, so I implore you to spare my life."

"No," said the Genie, "I shall kill you as you killed my son," and so saying, he seized the merchant by the arm, threw him on the ground, and lifted his saber to cut off his head.

The merchant, protesting his innocence, bewailed his wife and children, and tried pitifully to avert his fate. The Genie, with his raised scimitar, waited till he had finished, but was not in the least touched.



Scheherazade, at this point, seeing that it was day, and knowing that the Sultan always rose very early to attend the council, stopped speaking. "Indeed this is a wonderful story."

"The rest is still more wonderful," replied Scheherazade, "and if you would allow me to live another day, and let tell it to you the next night."

The Sultan said to himself, "I will wait till to-morrow; I can always have her killed when I have heard the end of her story."

The next night Scheherazade went on with the story. When the merchant saw that the Genie was determined to cut off his head, he said: "One word more, I entreat you. Grant me a little delay; just a short time to go home and bid my wife and children farewell, and to make my will. When I have done this I will come back here, and you shall kill me."

"But," said the Genie, "if I grant you the delay you ask, I am afraid that you will not come back."

"I give you my word of honor," answered the merchant, "that I will come back without fail tomorrow twelvemonth, I shall be waiting under these trees to give myself up to you."

On this the Genie left him near the fountain and disappeared.

The merchant, having recovered from his fright, mounted his horse and went on his road.

When he arrived home his wife and children received him with the greatest joy. But instead of embracing them he began to weep so bitterly that they soon guessed that something terrible was the matter. "Alas! I have only a year to live."

Then he told them what had passed between him and the Genie, and how he had given his word to return at the end of a year to be killed. When they heard this sad news they were in despair, and wept much.

The next day the merchant began to settle his affairs, and first of all to pay his debts. He gave presents to his friends, and large alms to the poor. He set his slaves at liberty, and provided for his wife and children. The year



soon passed away, and he was obliged to depart. When he tried to say good-bye he was quite overcome with grief, and with difficulty tore himself away. At length he reached the place where he had first seen the Genie, on the very day that he had appointed. He dismounted, and sat down at the edge of the fountain, where he awaited the Genie in terrible suspense.

Whilst he was thus waiting an old man leading a hind (a female deer) came towards him. They greeted one another, and then the old man said to him, "May I ask, brother, what brought you to this desert place, where there are so many evil genii about? To see these beautiful trees one would imagine it was inhabited, but it is a dangerous place to stop long in."

The merchant told the old man why he was obliged to come there. He listened in astonishment.

"This is a most marvelous affair. I should like to be a witness of your interview with the Genie." So saying he sat down by the merchant.

While they were talking another old man came up, followed by two black dogs. He greeted them, and asked what they were doing in this place. The old man who was leading the hind told him the adventure of the merchant and the Genie. The second old man had not sooner heard the story than he, too, decided to stay there to see what would happen. He sat down by the others, and was talking, when a third old man arrived. He asked why the merchant who was with them looked so sad. They told him the story, and he also resolved to see what would pass between the Genie and the merchant, so waited with the rest.

They soon saw in the distance a thick smoke, like a cloud of dust. This smoke came nearer and nearer, and then, all at once, it vanished, and they saw the Genie, who, without speaking to them, approached the merchant, sword in hand, and, taking him by the arm, said, "Get up and let me kill you as you killed my son."

The merchant and the three old men began to weep and groan.

Then the old man leading the hind threw himself at the monster's feet and said, "O Prince of the Genii, I beg of you to stay your fury and to listen to me. I am going to tell you my story and that of the hind I have with me, and if you find it more marvelous than that of the merchant whom you are about to kill, I hope that you will do away with a third part of his punishment?"

The Genie considered some time, and then he said, "Very well, I agree to this."

Name:

- _____ 1. The purpose of this passage is to:
- a. entertain
 - b. teach a time period in history
 - c. persuade the reader not to be a merchant
 - d. explain the nature of genii
- _____ 2. In the underlined sentence in paragraph one on page one, the word wallet probably would mean:
- a. a small object that money can be stored in and carried in one's pocket
 - b. a backpack sized object
 - c. a cart sized object to be pulled by a horse
- _____ 3. The genie being described as being "white with rage" is an example of:
- a. metaphor
 - b. simile
 - c. imagery
 - d. symbolism
 - e. alliteration
- _____ 4. On page two, the story interruption of Scheherazade is part of the book's:
- a. exposition
 - b. falling action
 - c. frame story
 - d. 2nd person narration
- _____ 5. How long does the genie give the man to live?
- a. a year
 - b. a month
 - c. a week
 - d. a day
- _____ 6. On the top of page three, we have the following passage:
- "May I ask, brother, what brought you to this desert place, where there are so many evil genii about? To see these beautiful trees one would imagine it was inhabited, but it is a dangerous place to stop long in."
- Why is the word spelled "genii" instead of "genie" as it is in the rest of the story?
- a. it is a misspelling
 - b. genii is plural of genie
 - c. genii is singular of genie
- _____ 7. When the genie comes the second time, he comes:
- a. in a cloud of smoke
 - b. in a cart pulled by dragons
 - c. from a lamp on the ground
 - d. riding a fiery camel
- _____ 8. This is an example of:
- a. drama
 - b. poetry
 - c. free verse
 - d. prose
- _____ 9. This story is told in:
- a. first person
 - b. second person
 - c. third person limited
 - d. third person omniscient
- _____ 10. Logically, what can we expect to happen at the end of the man with the hind's story?
- a. the genie kills the merchant
 - b. the genie spares the merchant
 - c. the merchant runs away
 - d. the man with the dogs tells his story