

The Fifth Voyage of Sinbad the Sailor

I soon longed for change and adventure. Therefore I set out once more, but this time in a ship of my own, which I built and fitted out at the nearest seaport. I wished to be able to call at whatever port I chose, taking my own time; but as I did not intend carrying enough goods for a full cargo, I invited several merchants of different nations to join me. We set sail with the first favorable wind, and after a long voyage upon the open seas we landed upon an unknown island which proved to be uninhabited. We determined, however, to explore it, but had not gone far when we found a roc's egg, as large as the one I had seen before and evidently very nearly hatched, for the beak of the young bird had already pierced the shell. In spite of all I could say to deter them, the merchants who were with me fell upon it with their hatchets, breaking the shell, and killing the young roc. Then lighting a fire upon the ground they hacked morsels from the bird, and proceeded to roast them while I stood by aghast.

Scarcely had they finished their **repast**, when the air above us was darkened by two mighty shadows. The captain of my ship cried out to us that the parent birds were coming, and urged us to get on board with all speed. This we did, and the sails were hoisted, but before we had made any way the rocs reached their despoiled nest and hovered about it, uttering frightful cries when they discovered the mangled remains of their young one. For a moment we lost sight of them, and were flattering ourselves that we had escaped, when they reappeared and soared into the air directly over our vessel, and we saw that each held in its claws an immense rock ready to crush us. There was a moment of breathless suspense, then one bird loosed its hold and the huge block of stone hurtled through the air, and fell with a mighty crash right in the midst of our luckless vessel, tearing it asunder into a thousand fragments. I myself went down with the rest, but had the good fortune to rise unhurt, and by holding on to a piece of driftwood I kept myself afloat and was presently washed up by the tide on to an island.

I began to examine the spot in which I found myself, and truly it seemed to me that I had reached a garden of delights. There were trees everywhere, and they were laden with flowers and fruit. I wandered among the trees, but always with some anxiety as to what I might see next. I saw an old man bent and feeble sitting upon the river bank, and at first I took him to be some ship-wrecked mariner like myself. Going up to him I greeted him in a friendly way, but he only nodded his head at me in reply. He made signs to me that he wished to get across the river to gather some fruit, and seemed to beg me to carry him on my back. Pitying his age, I took him up, and wading across the stream I bent down that he might more easily reach the bank, and bade him get down. But instead of allowing himself to be set upon his feet (even now it makes me laugh to think of it!), this creature who had seemed to me so decrepit leaped nimbly upon my shoulders, and hooking his legs round my neck gripped me so tightly that I was almost choked, and so overcome with terror that I fell to the ground. When I recovered, my enemy was still in his place, and seeing me revived he prodded me with one foot, until I was forced to get up and stagger about with him under the trees while he gathered and ate the choicest fruits. This went on all day, and even at night the terrible old man held on tight to my neck, nor did he fail to greet the first glimmer of morning light by drumming upon me with his heels, until I awoke and resumed my dreary march with rage and bitterness in my heart.

It happened one day that I passed a tree under which lay several dry gourds, and catching one up I amused myself with scooping out its contents and pressing into it the juice of several bunches of grapes which hung from every bush. When it was full I left it propped in the fork of a tree, and a few days later, carrying the hateful old man that way, I snatched at my gourd as I passed it and had the satisfaction of a draught of excellent wine so good and refreshing that I even forgot my detestable burden, and began to sing and dance.

The old man was not slow to perceive the effect which my draught had produced and that I carried him more lightly than usual, so he stretched out his skinny hand and seizing the gourd first tasted its contents cautiously, then drained them to the very last drop. The wine was strong so he also began to sing and soon I had the delight of feeling the iron grip of his goblin legs unclasp, and with one vigorous effort I threw him to the ground, from which he never moved again. I was so rejoiced to have at last got rid of this uncanny old man that I ran leaping down to the shore, where I met with some mariners who had anchored off the island to enjoy the delicious fruits, and to renew their supply of water.

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They heard the story of my escape with amazement, saying, "You fell into the hands of the Old Man of the Sea, and it is a mercy that he did not strangle you as he has everyone else upon whose shoulders he has managed to perch himself. He is a like a never waking nightmare to those who visit this island." After we had talked for a while they took me back with them on board their ship and we soon set sail, and after several days reached a large and prosperous-looking town where all the houses were built of stone. Here we anchored, and one of the merchants, who had been very friendly to me on the way, took me ashore with him and showed me a lodging set apart for strange merchants. He then provided me with a large sack, and pointed out to me a party of others equipped in like manner.

"Go with them," said he, "and do as they do, but beware of losing sight of them, for if you strayed your life would be in danger." With that he bade me farewell, and I set out with my new companions. I soon learnt that the object of our expedition was to fill our sacks with coconuts, but when I saw the trees and noted their height, I did not at all understand how we were to do it. The crowns of the palms were all alive with monkeys, big and little, which skipped from one to the other with surprising agility, seeming to be curious about us and disturbed at our appearance, and I was at first surprised when my companions after collecting stones began to throw them at the creatures, which seemed to me quite harmless. But then the monkeys, annoyed and wishing to pay us back in our own coin, begin to tear the nuts from the trees and cast them at us with angry and spiteful gestures, so that after very little labor our sacks were filled with the fruit which we could not otherwise have obtained.

As soon as we had as many as we could carry we went back to the town, where my friend bought my share and advised me to continue the same occupation until I had earned money enough to carry me to my own country. This I did, and before long had amassed a considerable sum. Just then I heard that there was a ship ready to sail, and taking leave of my friend I went on board. Along the way I amassed several treasures with which I came joyfully back to Baghdad, where I disposed of them for large sums of money. After that I rested from my labors and comforted myself with all the pleasures that my riches could give me.

After the next day's feast, Sinbad began the account of his sixth voyage as follows.

1. The purpose of this story is to:
 - a. teach a moral
 - b. entertain
 - c. demonstrate proper sailing techniques
 - d. scare little children into behaving
2. "Scarcely had they finished their repast" as found in the second paragraph on page means:
 - a. meal
 - b. chores
 - c. nap
 - d. good deeds
3. What causes his ship to sink?
 - a. tidal wave
 - b. storms
 - c. bad craftsmanship
 - d. rocs dropping rocks
4. The best lesson that we can learn from the rocs is:
 - a. be kind to animals
 - b. don't approach wild animals
 - c. birds don't take care of their eggs after people have touched them
 - d. You must always cook eggs thoroughly before eating
5. "He is a like a never waking nightmare to those who visit this island." This is a(n):
 - a. metaphor
 - b. allusion
 - c. pun
 - d. simile
6. This story is an example of:
 - a. poetry
 - b. drama
 - c. nonfiction
 - d. prose
7. "But then the monkeys, annoyed and wishing to pay us back in our own coin, begin to tear the nuts from the trees." Can best be corrected by changing "begin" to:
 - a. begins
 - b. began
 - c. beginning
 - d. began
8. We can predict that in the sixth of his seven voyages, Sinbad will:
 - a. get shipwrecked again
 - b. be killed
 - c. decide to stop going out sailing
 - d. become a king
9. The last sentence is supposed to:
 - a. make you want to look up other books about sailing
 - b. give the moral of the story
 - c. teach more about rocs
 - d. make you want to read the next tale

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