

Aladdin

A tale from the Middle East

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CHAPTER 1

The wizard

Aladdin was the son of Hassan the tailor. Hassan died when Aladdin was twelve and so the boy lived with his mother. They lived in a little house in the middle of the town. They were very poor. Sometimes Aladdin went to bed without any dinner.

Some years after his father's death, Aladdin was playing football in the street with his friends.

'Kick it to me, Aladdin!' said his friend.

Aladdin kicked the ball to his friend ... but an old man with a long grey beard caught it! The old man carried the ball to Aladdin.

'Good morning!' said the old man. 'You are a fine young man. What is your name?'

'My name is Aladdin,' he answered.

The old man stroked his beard. 'And what is your father's name?' he asked.

'My father's name was Hassan. He was a tailor in this town,' replied Aladdin. 'But he died when I was twelve. I live with my mother.'

'I knew it!' cried the old man. He clapped his hands and laughed. 'Hassan the tailor was my brother! You look just like him, with your black hair and your long legs. I am your uncle, Aladdin! Here, take these two gold coins! They are a present for your mother. Will you take me to visit her?'

‘Yes, Uncle, of course,’ said Aladdin happily. ‘We live in the next street.’ He was pleased to meet his uncle, and he was pleased with the present for his mother.

On the way to Aladdin’s house, the old man smiled to himself. ‘The silly boy doesn’t know that I am really a wizard!’ he thought. ‘Ho-ho, I am not his uncle at all!’



Aladdin and the old man stopped outside Aladdin's house. When Aladdin's mother opened the door, he said, 'Mother, this man is my uncle! He is my father's brother! He says I look just like my father! And look, he has given us a present – two gold coins!'

Aladdin's mother looked surprised. 'Thank you!' she said to the old man. 'Please come in and sit down.'

The man knelt on the floor. 'Dear lady!' he said and he suddenly began to cry. 'I am so sorry about my poor brother Hassan! I wanted to see him but now I am too late!'

Aladdin's mother frowned. 'Are you sure you are Hassan's brother?' she asked. 'He didn't tell me he had a brother.'

'That is because I left home when I was very young,' the old man replied. 'I went all round the world and made a lot of money. I was away for twenty years. I have just come back to this town for the first time, to see my family.'

'Now I understand,' said Aladdin's mother. 'We are very happy to see you. Will you stay and have some dinner with us? You are very welcome.'

'Yes, I will. Thank you very much,' replied the old man.

'Please stay here and talk to Aladdin,' she said. 'I will go to the market and buy some food. I won't be long.' Then she picked up a big shopping basket and left the house.

Aladdin and the old man sat and talked. Aladdin told him all about his life with his mother and about his friends. His 'uncle' told him about life in the big city. 'I will make you a rich trader one day, Aladdin,' he said.

When Aladdin's mother came back, she went into the kitchen. She made a wonderful feast. Chicken and rice,

cakes and honey, peaches and apricots. She served the food in her best dishes.

‘This is a wonderful dinner!’ cried the old man. He took a huge piece of cake and put it into his mouth.

‘It is thanks to you and your two gold coins,’ said Aladdin’s mother. ‘We are very poor and our food is usually simple.’

The three of them ate and talked for a long time. Then the old man stood up. ‘I must go now,’ he said. ‘I am staying at an inn – it’s not far away. Thank you, my dear lady, for the wonderful dinner. I will come back in the morning.’

The next day, the old man came back to the house and told Aladdin and his mother about his adventures. He told them about India, China, Egypt and the North Pole. Aladdin loved to listen to him and he became very fond of his new uncle.

On the third day, the old man came again.

‘Aladdin, I have enjoyed my time with you and your mother. You have both been very kind to me. Now I want to show you something,’ he said. ‘It’s something strange and wonderful. But we must go out of the town and into the countryside for a few days. Will you come?’

Aladdin was very excited. What an adventure!
‘Yes, please!’ he said. ‘Can I go, Mother?’

‘I am sure you will be safe with your uncle. Goodbye, my son. Come back soon!’ she replied. She hugged Aladdin and gave him some water to take with him on the journey.



Aladdin and the old man travelled for a long time. They left the town and went through some woods, across a hot, dry desert and into the blue mountains. They told stories and laughed as they walked. Aladdin was enjoying himself.

At last, the old man said, 'We will stop here, Aladdin, near these trees. We need to make a fire. Please go and find some wood.'

Aladdin was surprised. It was a hot day and they had no food to cook. Why did they need a fire? But he did what his uncle told him and collected a lot of wood.

When Aladdin put the wood down, the old man sprinkled some gold powder on top of it.

'*Abracadabra!*' he cried, and he moved his hands over the wood. The fire began to burn.

Aladdin was very surprised. What was that powder? What was his uncle doing? Suddenly, red and gold flames came from the fire. They were as high as the trees. Aladdin jumped away from the terrible heat. It was a huge fire!

'*Abracadabra!*' said the old man again, and he pointed all his fingers at the flames. The flames lowered straight away and the fire quickly went out.

Then the earth opened suddenly and a circle of stone appeared. It had a brass ring as a handle.

'It must be a door!' thought Aladdin. He was very afraid now. What was his uncle going to show him?

