

## Aladdin and the Enchanted Lamp

Mindful of what the Moor had said, Aladdin didn't touch a thing, but walked wonderingly along the path to the marble terrace at the end where, sure enough, there hung a lamp.

Aladdin blew it out, emptied the oil from it, and was about to leave when he thought, "It's a shame to go straight back without looking around. I might never have another chance, after all."

So he looked along the terrace and saw all manner of strange things. Here there was a cage containing a salamander wreathed in flames, with a notice underneath it in a language Aladdin couldn't read. Next there was a glass bottle in which an imp was prisoned, who beat the glass with his tiny fists and snarled with rage as Aladdin laughed; there was a notice in a different language under this one. Then there was a snake swallowing its tail, and as its mouth moved along the tail its neck grew behind it, so it stayed the same size; and there was a butterfly with a human face tethered by a golden chain no thicker than a hair, and dozens of other wonders, and by each of them was a notice in a different language: in Persian, in Turkish, in Greek, even in outlandish tongues like English.



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Finally he came to one he could read. It said, *Whoever wears me will be safe from any harm*, and the object it referred to was a plain ring of dull, black iron.

“It must be for me!” he thought. “They wrote it so I could read it, after all.”

It was too tempting to leave. Aladdin slipped the ring on his finger, and just at that moment he heard the Moor shouting:

“Aladdin! Aladdin!”

His voice was magnified by the tunnel, and he sounded like an evil spirit calling. Aladdin tucked the lamp into his clothes and ran back through the garden, snatching at the glittering fruits on the trees as he passed and thrusting them into his pockets.





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When he reached the tunnel, the Moor was screaming with anger, gnashing his teeth and clenching his fists, but as soon as he saw Aladdin his expression changed and he smiled sweetly.

“There you are, dear boy! I was so worried, I thought you’d turned into a black stone! Have you got the lamp?”

“Yes, Uncle.”

“Hand it up, then, hand it up!”

“Help me out first, Uncle, then I’ll give you the lamp.”

“Curse you! Do as I say! The lamp, boy, the lamp!”

Well, Aladdin was no fool. He’d begun to suspect the Moor as soon as he got that clout on the head, and the way he was carrying on now gave him away completely.

“You’re no uncle!” Aladdin cried. “You’re a sorcerer!”

With a scream louder than any before, the Moor stamped his foot and threw some powder in the air, and at once the earth groaned and shook and the entrance to the tunnel closed up. So did the door to the garden of wonders, and there was poor Aladdin, trapped beneath the earth.



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He beat and beat at the stone above him, shouting and shouting to be let out. The darkness got right into his eyes, and the earth absorbed his shouts like water: they sank in at once and vanished. Sobbing with fear, he felt his way down the steps to the door of the garden, but it was gone; the passage was blind, and the darkness was terrible. Not the faintest flicker of light shone there, not even the ghost of a glow-worm glimmered. He was buried alive.

Of course, Aladdin had been right about the Moor. He was no relation at all, but a dervish, a learned man, and cunning with it: he knew all there was to know about astrology and palmistry and sand-magic and water-magic and fire-magic. His mystic powers had shown him that there was a fabulous treasure under the Chinese city of Al-Kolo-Ats, which could only be retrieved by a youth called Aladdin, so he had sought first the city and then the youth, with the results we've seen. If only he'd been a little more patient, he would have had the lamp in his hands. As it was, he had nothing, so he stamped and roared with fury and disappointment, and went back home to nurse his vengeance. But so much for him.