

Aliah and Aretas

By Elise Lenkeek

Once upon a time, a long time ago, there was a king, but he was old and weak and it was through his weakness and foolishness that his son, Aliah, had bribed him into getting all the inheritance for himself. Aliah left nothing for his twin brother, Aretas. After this had happened the king sent out both of his sons to see how they would do in life. Aliah sat around doing nothing but carelessly spending the money that he had gotten from his father by deceit, but Aretas, left without any money, had to work very hard to earn a living.

Now it happened that one day as the king was sitting in his courtroom a sad thought came to him. "Which of my sons shall reign after me?" he exclaimed, for his sons were twins and no one knew which one was older. As he pondered the subject he began to feel a strange vibration it grew and grew till the palace was shaking. Paintings were falling off the walls and mirrors and china were smashing against the hard tile floor. Then the king's own throne toppled over, landing him flat on the tile floor. As the king looked up the vibration ceased, and there in front of him was a big, blue bottle. A smoky mist began coming out of it and there at the top of the mist was giant head. "Who are you," the king asked trembling. "I am a genii," boomed the head, "I come out every century and help one person make a decision, this century I heard your question and have come out to help you." The king stood speechless in surprise. "I know that you have not long to live," the genii continued, "so when you die I will come again and decide which of your sons is more worthy to reign." "O, thank you," gasped the king, but the genii was already disappearing into his bottle. Then the vibration began and the bottle disappeared.

After that the king no longer worried about who would be king after him but reigned in peace till he died two years later, and the whole country mourned his death.

When the two princes heard of his death, Aretas was struck with grief, but Aliah only thought of how his father's death could be an advantage to him. They were summoned to the castle to hear which one of them was to reign. As they were waiting in the courtroom a vibration began, and it grew more and more, till the castle felt as if it were going to crumble. Then suddenly a big, blue bottle appeared, the vibration ceased and the head and smoky mist came out of the bottle. The princes were speechless in surprise as they stood staring at the mysterious figure. "I am a genii," the genii said, "I am the person your father has

appointed, to decide who should reign in his place. I have prepared two tests for you and by them I will know who is worthy to reign. The first test is to pick the hardest-working most reliable servant; the second test is to pick the wisest captain for your armies.”

Then all of a sudden two men appeared, one of them, who was very fat, was dressed in fancy clothing his hands were smooth and white and there was not a speck of dirt on his clothing, but the other had on plain clothing and his hands were scarred and scratched and his clothing had streaks of dirt on it. “You must pick,” said the genii, “which one would make the most hard-working and reliable servant.” “The one in the fancy clothing, of course,” said Aliah, without thinking. “And which one would you pick?” said the genii, turning toward Aretas. “I would pick the other one for his hands are scarred and his clothes are dirty from all the work he has done, but the other looks like he hasn’t done a thing in his life.” “Aretas has chosen correctly,” said the genii, “he has picked the one who would be the most faithful and hard-working servant.”

“The second test,” said the genii, “will be to pick the best captain for your army.” Immediately two men appeared. The first was dressed in a suit of armor, he carried a sword in his sheath and a shield with a special design to let people know what knight he was. His armor was shining and his shield had silver and gold on it. The other knight also had a suit of armor, but it was not so shiny, he had a sword in his sheath and in his hand he held a spear, but he lacked a shield. “Which one will you choose,” said the genii, turning toward Aliah, “I would choose the one with the sword and the spear,” answered Aliah, “for if he loses his spear he can use his sword.” “And which one would you choose?” said the genii to Aretas. “I would choose the one with the sword and the shield,” said Aretas, “a knight needs a shield for protection and so his men know who he is. No one can tell who he is if he does not have a shield, when they go to war his own men won’t recognize him.

“Aretas has chosen correctly,” said the genii, “knights need a shield for protection and so their men will know who they are, much more than an extra weapon. Aretas has chosen the wisest answers and he shall be made king!” “No, I am the rightful king,” yelled Aliah, “I got the inheritance!” “You got it by bribery, deceit and flattery,” roared the genii, “and gave none of it to your brother.” “Your brother worked hard to earn a living,” continued the genii, “and made very wise decisions and that is why I am making him king, but I am going to turn you into a

repulsive rodent and you shall stay one till the day you die!” Then the genii turned Aliah into a rat, went into his big blue bottle and was never seen again.

“Long live King Aretas,” shouted the courtiers. Messengers were sent around the country to bring the glad tidings of the new king. King Aretas was a wonderful king he was kind and just and wise in all the decisions he made, he was also kind to Aliah, who was now a rat, and gave him plenty of good food to eat. A few months later a maid was sweeping when she saw a rat crossing the floor, horrified that a rat was in the palace and not knowing it was Aliah, she beat it to death with her broom. King Aretas was very sad when he heard the news and he proclaimed that there was to be a day of mourning for his brother Aliah. So King Aretas reigned in peace and prosperity and lived happily ever after.