

Arabian Knights

By

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EXT. ARABIAN NIGHTS MOTEL [PLEASE INSERT
\PRERENDERUNICODE{ÅÅ\$} INTO PREAMBLE] OUTSKIRTS OF ABU
JEBA, ARABABIA [PLEASE INSERT \PRERENDERUNICODE{ÅÅ\$} INTO
PREAMBLE] NIGHT

Atop a sleepy and unmistakably seedy establishment, a
partially broken neon light with a short blinks on and off
erratically: Arabian Nights Hotel, Arabian Nights Hotel,
Arabian Nights Motel ...

INT. THE SAME HOTEL -- HALLWAY - NIGHT

Frayed and faded carpet lines the dingy ill-lit hallway. a
bellhop from the subcontinent shuffles past, coughing and
wiping his nose on the sleeve of his ill-fitting uniform.

A tinny, busted wall speaker emits a carpenter's song,
"We've Only Just Begun."

 CARPENTERS (V.O)
 ... we've only just beguuuunnn
 ... to liiivve ...

JOHN WATES, a handsome but somewhat nervous American,
makes his way down the ratty hallway, bag in hand, laptop
satchel slung over his shoulder.

He comes to a room, compares the door number with the
number on a key in his hand, begins to insert the key into
the lock. As he puts pressure on the door, it falls into
the room with a loud crash.

What a dump.

Loud laughter erupts from a few doors down.

A door bursts open and DR. AL-SNAFU, a rotund Arab man
wearing an American Indian war bonnet and with a bathroom
towel wrapped around his waist, clutches a bottle of Jack
Daniels as he chases after a bare-breasted prostitute
sporting a black Stetson, nylon stockings held up with
garters, frilly panties and cowboy boots.

They come John's way. the prostitute giggles as she
passes by and then disappears around a corner.

Al-Snafu stops drunkenly in front of John and begins to
dance about in a circle, hooting and hollering in
imitation of a TV Indian. His face is painted sloppily
with bright red lipstick.

 DR. AL-SNAFU
 Luh, luh, luh, luh

It seems he has a bit of a stutter.

(CONTINUED)

DR. AL-SNAFU (CONT'D)
(exuberantly drunk)
Me big chief!!!!

He dances around drunkenly a bit more. John steps back out of the way, tightens his grip on his bags.

JOHN
Do you need some help?

DR. AL-SNAFU
(laughing, out of control)
Me make-em - luh - heap big
warpath on Russian pussy! You
mideast - luh, luh, luh - oil
cowboy. You J.R. Ewing?

JOHN
(frightened)
No, actually ... I'm a

Al-Snafu pushes the whiskey bottle into John's hand.

DR. AL-SNAFU
You drink, pale - luh, luh, luh -
face!

The prostitute sticks her head around the corner, giggles, and Al-Snafu hustles off in pursuit, forgetting totally about John. Their laughter fades as they run further down the hallway. John looks in their direction, nervously steps over the door into his room. He lifts the door back into place.

INT. JOHN'S ROOM - CHEAP HOTEL - NIGHT

John tosses his bag on the bed, watches as a small cloud of dust rises from the sheets. He sets the whiskey bottle down, puts the chain lock on the door and wedges a chair against the knob to hold it in place.

He goes over to the sink in one corner of the spartan quarters, splashes water on his face and rubs his eyes. He grabs a ratty towel to dry off and watches the towel rack fall off and clatter on the floor. He dries his hands, drops the towel in the sink, goes to the window and peaks out the blinds.

The view is of a vacant desert landscape lit by the moon that stretches on into the night, seemingly forever. A meteor crosses the sky, then another. John studies the sky a moment, checks to make sure the window is locked, but the lock comes off in his hand. He looks at it, lets it fall on the floor.

(CONTINUED)

He sits on the bed, reaches for the whiskey bottle, stops, thinks about it a second, then reluctantly brings it to his lips, tilts it back.

He studies his reflection in the window, takes off his shoes and lays back on the bed, removes a wedding band from his ring finger, ponders it for a second, holding it up in the light, then lays it on the bedside table, closes his eyes.

EXT. THE ROYAL PALACE - ABU JEBA, ARABABIA - ABOUT THE SAME TIME AS PREVIOUS SCENE

KING AWAD is on the verge of nodding off while an unhappy supplicant in front of him gestures theatrically, drones on in Arabic about something or other.

At the king's side is ALI BEN ALI AL-GHUTRA, confidant and advisor, who loudly clears his throat, bringing the king back to consciousness.

KING AWAD
(behind his hand)
What is it this one wants, Ali?

ALI BEN ALI
(shuffles through some papers)
It's so late, I'm a little mixed up myself. Let's see ... was it a car or a house? Maybe it was surgery?

KIND AWAD
Whatever it is, give him two.

Ali Ben Ali motions for the supplicant to cease and desist, takes the man aside.

King Awad rises to leave, leaning heavily on a cane.

The Supplicant, now smiling broadly, tries to make a big production of bowing to and flattering the king, but two guards shuffle him out of the room.

ALI BEN ALI
Uh ... there's still the other matter.

KING AWAD
(wearily)
What is this? A 24-hour bazaar?

ALI BEN ALI
Prince Ahmed is outside.

King Awad rolls his eyes.

KIND AWAD

Ahmed.

ALI BEN ALI

He's been waiting for two hours.

King Awad sit heavily, nods to Ali Ben Ali.

KING AWAD

Ok ... let's get this over with.

EXT. ROYAL PALACE - MOMENTS LATER

A palace side door bursts open and a remarkably short Arab, PRINCE AHMED, exits angrily. He pushes back his fine silk robe, brings one hand up and bites a knuckle to keep from crying.

But, in fact, he does begin to cry, and as he wipes away a tear from one eye, he catches himself and bites his bottom lip with determination.

PRINCE AHMED

(to himself)

No. You no cry.

He pulls out a pocket mirror, studies his face.

PRINCE AHMED (CONT'D)

You ruin mascara.

He dabs at his eye again, smearing his makeup.

PRINCE AHMED

(vexed)

See?

A PALACE GUARD steps out of the shadows, smirks, gives the prince a half-hearted perfunctory salute. The guard snatches a two-way radio from his belt, barks an Arabic command into it, bringing a black stretch limo screeching around a corner and skidding to a halt in front of the prince

Ahmed walks over to the limo and the guard opens the door for him. The guard smacks him a bit on the ass with the door as he slams it shut.

INT. LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

Ahmed tumbles into the limo, flashes an angry glance at the guard, dabs at his mascara with a tissue, as his dark and beautiful wife, PRINCESS TEEKRA, lifts the black veil covering her face and leans forward toward him with a look of alarm.

(CONTINUED)

PRINCESS TEEKRA
Ahmed, who has died?

Ahmed drops his guard, sobs loudly.

PRINCE AHMED
It is worse than death.

PRINCESS TEEKRA
What, Ahmed? What can be worse
than death?

Ahmed composes himself with supreme effort, pauses for dramatic effect.

PRINCE AHMED
He has condemned us to Shaheet!

The princess gasps, sits back in her seat, too stunned to speak.

EXT. LIMOSINE - CONTINUOUS

Tires squeal as the limo lurches from the curb.

EXT. RUNDOWN FOREIGN WORKERS COMPOUND - SHAHEET, ARABABIA
- ABOUT THE SAME TIME AS PREVIOUS SCENE

A dim light illuminates a half-cocked sign on a sagging fence. In crudely painted letters, the sign says, "Leetle Bangladesh Blanned Komunity for Worker." Through the fence we see a ramshackle collection of tin shacks set higgledy-piggledy between some rocky hills.

A few people walk about the community, but all is mostly quiet. There are no street lights, no lights from any structure, except for a large concrete block building on the far side of the compound. Here we see a couple of street lights and the windows are lighted. Steam pours from a smokestack on the end of the building. A few men can be seen through the windows, walking about the building as if they are working.

The sky is clear and dark. Occasionally a shooting star lights the sky.

EXT. NEXT TO THE CONCRETE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

RUSS MCDARE, rugged 40-something American, badly shaven and sporting a dirty cowboy hat, walks out a door at the loading dock of the concrete block building. He is followed by two workers who load some boxes into an old Land Rover backed up next to the dock. The workers go back inside.

(CONTINUED)

RUSS

You boys keep it coming. I need
10 for the delivery.

One of the workers looks back, gives Russ a thumbs up,
disappears into the building.

Russ opens one of the boxes, takes out a pint bottle of
what seems to be alcohol. He inspects it in the light
for a moment, breaks the seal, smells of it, then turns
it up, takes a big swig, smiles broadly.

RUSS

Eat your heart out, Jim Beam.

BIMAN, the plant foreman, a Bangladeshi man about 50,
sticks his head out the door, bobs his head from side to
side.

BIMAN

Hey, boss, you come to my house
tonight, no? My wife make kalia.

RUSS

Sorry, Biman. Gotta pick up two
new teachers at the airport early
tomorrow. You always make me get
drunk!

Biman feigns astonishment.

BIMAN

Biman make you drunk? Biman make
sun come up in morning too. Biman
make wind blow in evening. Biman
very powerful man, no?

Russ grins. Indistinct yelling emanates from inside the
building, some glass breaks. Biman turns in the doorway,
gestures angrily, yells at someone in Bengali, goes back
inside.

Russ shakes his head, walks out to the edge of the loading
dock, looks up at the stars, turns the bottle up, takes
another big swig just as a shooting star lights up the
sky, then another, then another.

RUSS

(quietly)

Shit yeah.

He reaches for a pack of Redman chewing tobacco in his
back pocket, stuffs a wad in his jaw.

He sees another falling star.

RUSS
(quietly)
Shit yeah.

INT. KING AWAD'S QUARTERS - PALACE IN ABU JEBA - ABOUT THE SAME TIME

King Awad, in his nightclothes, mixes a gin and tonic, heavy on the gin. Ali Ben Ali, still diligently in attendance, shuffles through some royal paperwork at a desk. Awad walks out onto the balcony.

EXT. BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

The king looks down at one of the palace guards, who snaps to attention, tosses off a salute. Awad shifts his attention to the sky, where a bright shooting star lights up the night.

Ali Ben Ali, drink in hand, steps out onto the balcony just as another meteor passes overhead.

KING AWAD
It's a bad omen, Ali.

ALI BEN ALI
Rubbish, Awad. It's the Leonid Meteor Shower. Happens every year.

KING AWAD
(smiles)
Did you see Ahmed's face when I told him I was appointing him Prince of Shaheet?

Ali Ben Ali chuckles softly.

ALI BEN ALI
Not quite what he expected, was it? It was worth the extra wait just to see the horror in his eyes.

Awad sighs.

KIND AWAD
It's a pity Teekra will have to accompany him though.

ALI BEN ALI
(cautiously)
Well ... she chose to marry him, Awad.

Awad nods.

(CONTINUED)

ALI BEN ALI (CONT'D)
Awad ... What's past is past.

KIND AWAD
(small smile)
Sometimes, what's past is simply
prologue, my friend.

ALI BEN ALI
You think too much.

KIND AWAD
Just like an old man, no?

They clink their glasses together.

KIND AWAD (CONT'D)
Well, she can do us no harm ...
especially in Shaheet.

ALI BEN ALI
Only a woman.

KIND AWAD
(quietly)
Yes ... but so much like her
mother.

They look up at the sky again. Another shooting star
streaks past.

EXT. ABU JEBA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - ABOUT THE SAME TIME

Passengers disembark from a 747. TERRY BOLT, a skinny,
extremely nervous American man with a facial tic and an
enormous camera dangling from his neck, comes down the
stairs of the plane, carry-on in hand.

INT. ABU JEBA AIRPORT TERMINAL - MOMENTS LATER

Bolt wanders vacantly inside, pulling his small bag behind
him as he walks into the terminal. He is immediately
accosted by an aggressive BAGGAGE PORTER from the Indian
subcontinent.

BAGGAGE PORTER
Hey, boss!

Bolt looks about in startled confusion.

BAGGAGE PORTER (CONT'D)
Hey, boss! I am taking the
baggages, sarh!

(CONTINUED)

BOLT
(gripping his bag)
I only have the one ... I, uh
....

The porter snatches the bag away, throws it carelessly on a ridiculously large baggage cart and takes off, weaving pell-mell through the crowd in the terminal.

Bolt is too taken aback to react. A fat Arab man in traditional dress bends over his baggage a few feet away, farts loudly in Bolt's direction. Bolt starts, scurries away like a startled deer after the baggage porter.

EXT. AIRPORT, CURBSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

The porter tries to flag down a taxi as Bolt catches up to him.

BAGGAGE PORTER
Hey, boss! I am bring the taxi
for you. You want hotel?

Bolt doesn't respond immediately.

BAGGAGE PORTER (CONT'D)
You want girl?

Shocked, Bolt begins to mumble and gesture in a confused way.

BAGGAGE PORTER (CONT'D)
(impatient)
You want boy?

BOLT
(his tick flaring up)
No, no, no! I - I - I - I suppose
I need a hotel. Just a hotel,
please. I ... I'm very tired. I
have to go to Shaheet in the
morning. I'm an art teacher.

The porter nods, uninterested.

Bolt's eyes become fixed on a sign just across the busy terminal. The sign has evidently been run over by one or more vehicles and part of the placard is missing.

All it says is "m: The Final Solution" and in smaller type: "For More Information, Contact" The rest of the message is broken off.

The roar of a jet engine all but drowns out every other noise as a plane lifts off a nearby runway, flies directly overhead.

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