

# Aisha in Dreamland

by Ana Stjelja

## The Flying Carpet

Aisha was about to celebrate her sixth birthday. Aisha's mother used to tell her bedtime stories. But these days, her mother was more than tired from her illness, and recently she was unable to tell her stories. Not even their favourite ones from the Arabian nights. The desert was such a mysterious place where anything might happen—so unlike the countryside in Serbia. Aisha was sad, for without a bedtime story she couldn't fall asleep. So she made a wish! She opened her bedroom window, looked into the sky and said, "My name is Aisha. I wish to fall asleep fast and to dream beautiful dreams." The moon was shining so bright. It looked as if it was smiling for the little girl, as if her wish had been heard. Aisha went to her bed. She put her head on her pillow, which was so soft that it was like sleeping on thousands and thousands of cotton wool balls.

The whole room was sleeping calmly along with little Aisha. But, not for long. All of a sudden, the walls started to tremble, the bookshelf started to move forward, and shadows appeared dancing across on the wall. Eventually everything stopped. Aisha was still sleeping deeply, but her room was in disarray. Everything was upside down. The books were on the floor, all of them except one. It was the book *One Thousand and One Nights*. The pages of the book started to scroll so quickly it woke Aisha up. The girl was confused. Still sleepy, she got up and was surprised when she saw her room. She turned on the light and immediately spotted the scrolling book.

The window in Aisha's room burst open by the gush of a strong wind. Aisha approached the window, and her big, brown eyes saw an amazing sight. It was a carpet, large and colourful, with tassels the kind of which she had seen in her grandma's house. On the carpet there sat a boy whose appearance reminded Aisha of Aladdin, the hero of the stories her mother used to tell her at bedtime.

“Hello, Aisha. I'm Aladdin.”

“How come you know my name?” Aisha asked shyly.

“The Moon whispered it to me. You made a wish, didn't you? I am here to make it come true. Are you ready to go on an adventure?”

“Where?” asked Aisha.

“To the Magic Desert,” answered Aladdin.

Aisha was a little scared, but deep down in her little soul, she was also quite curious.

“Well, I'd love to. But I'm afraid.”

“There's nothing to be afraid of,” said Aladdin.

The magic carpet landed on the floor of Aisha's room so that she could climb onto it. As soon as Aisha was seated comfortably, she was lifted off and into her first big adventure.

## The Magic Desert

Aladdin took Aisha to a Magic Desert. The carpet landed safely in the heart of this vast and magical desert. Strangely enough, it was day, not night. The sand that covered this desert was golden, and in the distance it turned into the colour of amber, which was also the colour of her father's rosary. As a sign of welcoming little Aisha into the Magic Desert, the sand dunes performed a magic dance. The girl's face lit up instantly. Her attention was drawn to some silhouettes moving in the distance. Aisha asked Aladdin what that was, and he replied:

“Those are caravans, Aisha. Salt miners ride their camels and form caravans as they move through the desert transporting their salt. They are the kings of the desert now.”

A one-humped camel suddenly appeared before them.

“Hello, Aisha. I've come to welcome you to this Magic Desert of ours.”

Surprised, Aisha asked:

“You can talk?”

“Yes, and I can sing too. Do you want to hear one of my songs?”

Aisha nodded joyfully.

*The Magic Desert's where I live,  
Its sand is hot beyond belief,  
With caravans I travel on end,  
And all salt miners are my friends.*

Aisha reached up and stroked the one-humped camel on its chest.

“I like your song a lot. Do you have any more surprises for me?”

“I could take you to a place I know you will love. Would you like that?”

The camel kneeled down, and Aisha climbed onto her back. Aisha and Aladdin parted ways there. And so, the white one-humped camel took Aisha to a wondrous place.

## The Joyful Oasis

The singing camel entertained Aisha while they were on their way to the Joyful Oasis, which was a really wonderful place in the middle of the desert. Upon entering the Joyful Oasis, the two of them were passing between two lines of palm trees whose leaves were swaying in the wind to the rhythm of the song the camel was quietly humming. Aisha spotted a tall palm tree that extended its leaves towards her, wanting to embrace her. Aisha jumped off the camel and wrapped her arms around the amiable palm tree, feeling all its warmth. Dates started falling all around her from its crown.

“Here, help yourself,” said the palm tree. “I hope you like dates.”

“I love them,” said Aisha. “Mum would always buy me dates.”

While she was savouring the sweet and delicious fruit, Aisha continued to look around in wonder. The Joyful Oasis was adorned with a pond surrounded by olives, figs, orange, lemons and trees. This was the place where caravans stopped after a long and arduous journey for refreshment. Aisha went over to the pond for the very same reason. Her face was reflected in the clear water of this Joyful Oasis. Aisha saw something that took her breath away—it was the figure of her mother. She was holding in her arms two small babies. Her mother’s smile was so joyous that Aisha’s eyes welled up momentarily. She felt a great sadness because her mother was ill.

“Why are you crying, Aisha? Come on, climb up and I will take you back to Aladdin for your next adventure.” With her tiny fingers, Aisha wiped away the tears welling up and climbed onto the camel, who took her to where Aladdin was resting with the magic carpet.

### **Scheherazade’s Skein**

“Aisha, I promised that I would take you on another adventure. If we wish to enter this kingdom, we have to find the elusive Scheherazade’s skein. When we find it, we will have to grab hold of its thread because that’s the only way we can enter the chambers of this well-hidden kingdom,” Aladdin said.

“My Mum once told me a secret. If I wish for something that I can’t get, I just need to say these words,” replied Aisha.

*When the heavens open wide above,  
Aisha will be blessed with all the love,  
No longer will she feel so blue,  
And Aisha’s wishes will come true.*

As soon as Aisha said these words, she saw the mesmerizing Scheherazade appear at one of the windows of the stone tower. She was more captivating than all the princesses Aisha had seen in her books. Scheherazade let go of the skein, which began to unwind until it reached the ground.

Overjoyed, Aisha caught hold of Scheherazade’s thread, and she and Aladdin climbed into one of the chambers of this kingdom. They only spotted Scheherazade’s gilded veil for a moment before she disappeared. Aladdin explained to her:

“Scheherazade tells a story to the King every night.”

“Just like my mother did for me. I thought that stories were told only to children,” said Aisha.

“That’s true, but Scheherazade has to tell the King stories so he doesn’t take her life. She never completes the story and always leaves him wanting to hear more so she herself can live.”

Aladdin continued, “Come on, I’ve heard that there is a magic lamp in the palace—let’s go and find it.”

They climbed a long stone stairway and came to a door leading into the secret chamber. Little Aisha noticed a moon carved into the door. She traced the crescent of the moon and the door opened. The moonlight from outside shone very brightly, illuminating the interior of the hidden chamber. Aisha and Aladdin spotted the magic lamp.

## **The Magic Lamp**

“Aladdin, you should rub this lamp.”

“No, Aisha, you should do it. This is your adventure.”

Aisha took the lamp in her hands and gave it a vigorous rub. At that moment, the chamber shook strongly and before them there appeared a female genie.

“Hello! Thank you for setting me free. I was imprisoned in this lamp for a very long time. I would like to grant you three wishes for my freedom.”

“Aren’t you supposed to be a male genie, like in the tales my mother reads to me?” Aisha asked.

“Do you believe everything you read? My name is Ghina, and I am at your service.”

“I can make any wishes I want?” asked Aisha.



“Yes! What will they be?”

Aisha said:

“Firstly, I wish a safe return home. Secondly, I wish to see my mother recovered from her illness.”

“All right, and what is your third wish, Aisha?” asked Ghina.

“My third wish is to take my Mum on a visit to this dreamland.”

Aisha and Aladdin were soon back on their magic carpet and were ready for the journey back home.

## **The Return Home**

Aisha and Aladdin were flying high up in the sky. Down below, those same sand dunes were dancing, the white one-humped camel greeted them with her song, and the palm trees joyfully waved their leaves at the two of them. Aisha flew over the whole world, as a real globetrotter. The scenes beneath her were breathtaking.

As the day was dawning in her country, she spotted her town below.

“We’re home, Aisha. There is your room.”

“Thank you, Aladdin, for taking me on this wonderful journey that I will never forget.”

Aisha lay in her bed and fell asleep peacefully.

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“Aisha, Aishaaaa...,” her mother’s soft voice was waking her. The girl opened her eyes and exclaimed in delight:

“Mum, you look so much better!!!”

“Yes, my dear little Aisha, a miracle happened and I got well overnight.”

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When the night fell, Aisha's mother came to Aisha's room to read her a bedtime story, as she had always done. Aisha said:

"We have somewhere to go. Take my hand."

Aisha and her mother embraced each other, and off they flew.