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Opening extract from

Quentin Blake's The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor

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"I am one of the grooms of King Mihrjan," he said. "We are stationed in various places across this island, and we have sole charge of the king's horses. Every month, at about the time of the new moon, we bring some of our best young mares, tether them on the seashore, and hide ourselves beneath the ground, waiting for the sea-stallions. Soon the stallions catch the scent of the mares and, seeing no one, emerge from the sea to mate with them. But then they try to entice the mares away with them, into the waves, and it is then that we must leap from our hiding places, shouting and waving our arms, in order to startle the stallions and drive them back into the sea.

"When the mares finally give birth to their foals, the little creatures are worth their weight in gold. There are no other horses like them on the face of the earth. And now," he said, "it is time for me to report to our great King Mihrjan. You are indeed fortunate that you stumbled upon us, for I shall be the means not only of saving your life but of returning you to your own land."

After this we sat talking for a while until the other grooms arrived for their meal. They were all curious to know how I came to be among them and so I repeated my story while they ate.

Then it was time to set off for the palace. They on their steeds and I on one of the mares they had provided for me, we rode nonstop until we reached the gates of the capital city of King Mihrjan. We dismounted in the grand courtyard, where my host told me to wait while he acquainted the king with my story.

Shortly after I was summoned into the royal presence. The King greeted me courteously and, wishing me a long life, desired me to tell him my tale in my own words. So once again I told my story in every detail.



The King was most impressed. "My son," he said, "you are clearly blessed by Fortune, and while you remain with us you shall be well treated and well rewarded." And then, to my astonishment, he appointed me as his agent for the port. My main job would be to register all the ships that entered the port.

I told him how deeply grateful I was and accepted the post with thanks. My work necessitated reporting to the King regularly, and he became even more considerate towards me with the passing of time. From his hands I received all kinds of costly gifts, and soon I became a trusted intermediary between the King and any of his subjects who wanted to petition him.

For a long time I enjoyed my new responsibilities, but all the same I never lost the opportunity of questioning the merchants and sailors and