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opening extract from

aladdin and the enchanted lamp

retold by

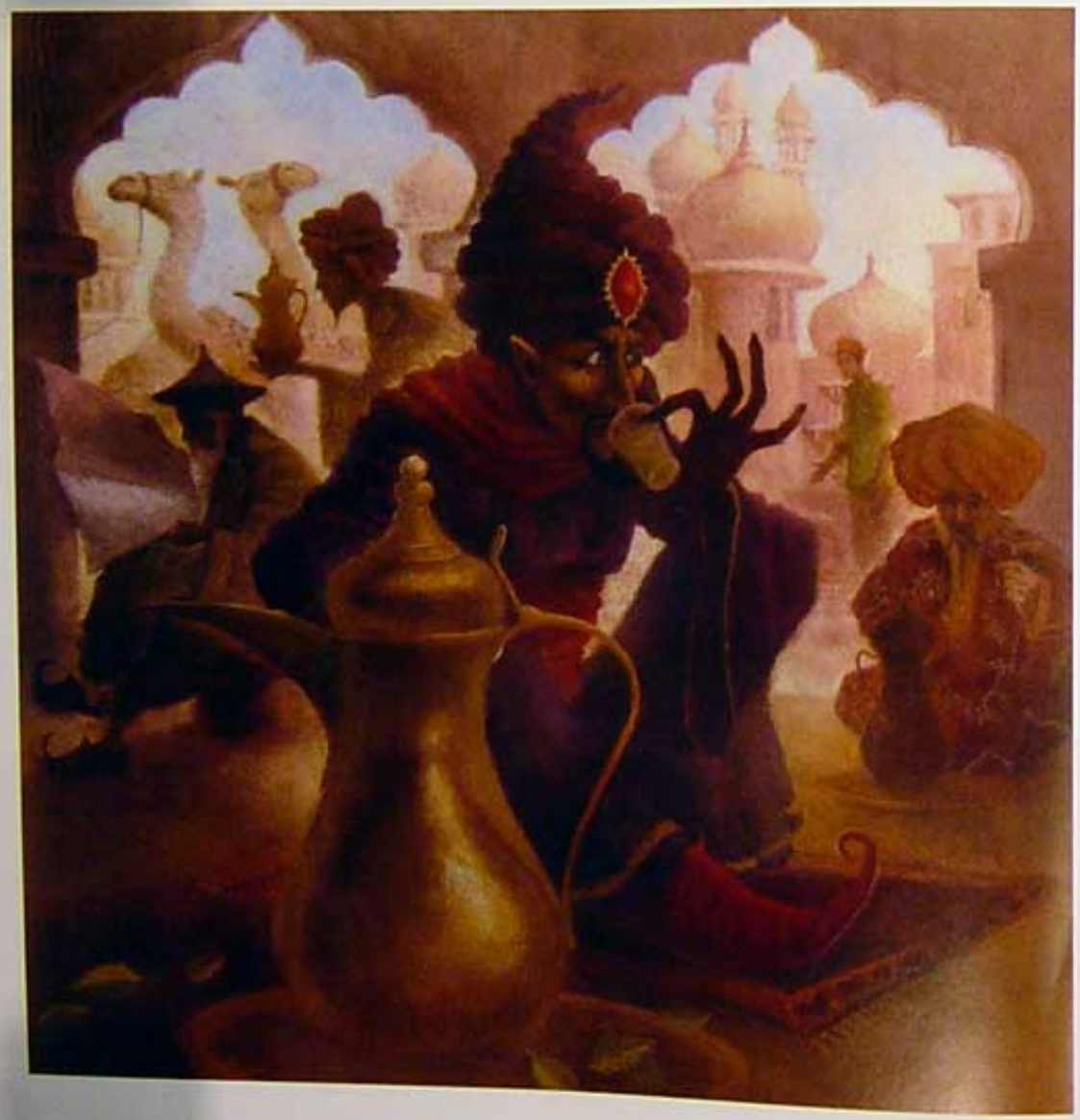
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illustrated by sophy williams

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Once upon a time in China, there lived a boy called Aladdin. He was the son of a tailor called Mustafa, and he made his poor father's life a misery. He ran about the marketplace all day long with a lot of other rogues and scoundrels, getting into trouble, making mischief, and laughing at everyone who tried to make him behave. He wouldn't take up any trade, he wouldn't get a job, and in the end it was too much for Mustafa, who went into a decline and died of worry.

Aladdin's mother was left to look after him on her own. The only work she could find was spinning cotton, so she had to do that while Aladdin hung about the streets with his idle friends.

"Why don't you find some decent work to do, you lazy wretch?" she said.

"Everyone to their trade, mother! You spin cotton and I make mischief. That's a fine trade; it suits me well."

She felt like following her husband to the grave.

One day in the bazaar, as Aladdin was sitting by the fountain flicking water at the passers-by, a certain Moor happened to be sipping

mint tea in a nearby coffee shop, twisting his beard into a point and listening to everything that went on. As he heard the name "Aladdin", his ears pricked up, his sharp eyes glittered, and his long fingers curled like claws, because he knew something about Aladdin that Aladdin didn't know.

He watched the boy for some time, and finally he came up to him and said, "Young man, what is your name?"

"Aladdin."

"Not Aladdin the son of Mustafa the tailor?"

"Yes, that's me. But my father's been dead for a year now; there's just me and my mother left."

At that, the Moor began to wail as if his heart was broken. He tore his hair, he pulled his beard, he beat his breast, and the tears ran down his cheeks like rivers down a mountainside. Aladdin was astonished.

"My brother!" the Moor sobbed. "My poor brother Mustafa! I came all this way only to find him dead! Oh, oh, oh, the pity of it – the sorrow of it – but his son is alive, at least! Aladdin, my nephew, heart of my brother's heart, my blood calls out to you!"

And he threw his arms around Aladdin and kissed him on both cheeks. Aladdin was deeply impressed, and so were all his idle friends watching from the fountain nearby, because the Moor was a rich man: he had a silver buckle on his belt and a golden dagger at his waist, and a blood-red ruby sparkled in his turban.

Then Aladdin was even more impressed, because the Moor took out a purse and gave him ten dinars, saying, "Take these to your mother, Aladdin, my dear nephew, and tell her to buy the best food she can find and prepare a meal, and I'll call round tonight and pay my respects to my dear brother's widow. Oh! Oh! Brother of mine! Dead! My

