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HAFED'S DREAM:

OR, THE "CHANCE WORLD."

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At the foot of one of those gigantic mountains in Asia, which lift up their heads so far above the clouds, that the eye of man never saw their summits, stood a beautiful cottage, facing the east. The mountain stream leaped and murmured to the north; the verdant plain where the bright-eyed gazelle sported, lay spread in front; the garden and the olive grove, filled with every flower and every fruit which an oriental sun could pencil in ripeness, lay on the south; while back, to the west, rose the everlasting mountains. Here were walks and shades and fruits, such as were found nowhere else. The sun shone upon no spot more luxuriant; the moon beams struggled to enter no place more delightful; the soft wings of the breezes of evening fanned no such spot in all the east. The howl of the wolf was never heard here; the sly fox never came here to destroy; and here the serpent's hiss was never heard. This cottage was the home of HAFED, aged and the prosperous. He reared the cottage; he adorned this spot; and he lived for more than four-score years here, and lived and studied. During all this time, the sun had never forgotten to visit daily; the harvest had never failed, the pestilence had never destroyed, and the mountain stream had never dried up. The wife of his youth still lived to cheer and bless him; and his son and daughter were such as were not to be found in all that Province. No youth could rein the horse, hurl the javelin, chase the lion, or delight the social circle like this son. No daughter of kings could be found so beautiful and perfect, as was this daughter, with an eye so bright and joyous, and a form so symmetrical as hers. But who can ensure earthly happiness? In one short week, Hafed was stripped of all his joys. His wife went to see a new white peacock, which it was said a neighbor, who lived a mile off in the ravine, had just brought home. She took cold, and a quick fever followed, and on her return, Hafed saw that she must die. Before two days were gone, the old man was standing at her open grave. He gazed long, and said impatiently—"Cover her, cover the only woman that I ever loved!" The son and the daughter both returned from the burial of their mother, fatigued and sick. The nurse gave them, she thought, a simple medicine. In a few hours it was found to be poison. Hafed saw that they must die; for the laws of nature are fixed, and poison kills. He buried them in one wide, deep, grave, and it seemed as if in that grave he buried his reason and his religion. He tore his hair, he cursed the light of day, and when the moon turned into blood; and when all, he blasphemed his God, declaring that the laws which he had established were all wrong, useless, and worse than he. He wished the world were governed by chance; but as this was a hopeless wish, he wished that at his death he might go to a world where there was no need to fix unalterable laws. He assigned the wisdom of God in his government

over this world, declaring that his plans were weak, and worse than none, and that it would be far better to have no God in the universe!

In the centre of Hafed's garden stood a large beautiful Palm tree. Under it was Hafed sitting, the second evening after closing the grave over his children. The seat on which he sat had been reared by his son. On the leaf of the tree which lay before him, were some exquisite verses written by the pencil of his daughter. Before him lay the beautiful country covered with green, sprinkled here and there, as far as the eye could see, with the habitations of men, and upon this great landscape the shadows of the mighty mountains were now setting. In the east, the moon was just pushing up her modest face, and the gold of day was softening into the silver of night. While Hafed looked on all this, grief began to swell in his throat; his tongue murmured; his heart was full of hard thoughts of God, which nearly amounted to blasphemy.

As the night deepened, Hafed, as he then thought, fell asleep with a heavy heart. When he supposed he awoke, it was in a new spot. The mountain, the landscape, the home, were all gone. All was new.

As he stood wondering where he was, he saw a creature approaching him, which, at first, he mistook for a baboon; but on its coming near, he discovered that it was a creature somewhat resembling a man, but every way mal-formed, ill-shaped, and monstrous.

He came up and walked around Hafed as he would a superior being, exclaiming, "beautiful, beautiful creature!"

"Shame, shame on thee!" said Hafed; "dost thou treat a stranger thus with insults? Leave off thy jests, and tell me where I am, and how I came here!"

"I do not know how you came here, but here you are in our world, which we call *chance world*, because every thing happens here by chance."

"Ah! is it so? This must be delightful! This is just the world for me. Oh! had I always lived here, my beautiful children would not have died under a foolish and inexorable law! Come, show me this world, for I long to see it. But have ye really no God, nor any one to make laws and govern you just as he sees fit?"

"I don't know what you mean by God; we have nothing of that kind here—nothing but chance; but go with me and you will understand all about it."

As they proceeded, Hafed began to notice that every thing looked queer and odd. Some of the grass was green, some red, some white, some new, and some dying; some grew with the top downward; and on the whole the sight was very painful. He stopped to examine an orchard; here chance had been at work. On a fine looking apple tree, he saw no fruit but large coarse cucumbers. A small peach tree was breaking down under its load of gourds. Some of the trees were growing with their tops downward, and the roots branching out into the air. Here and there were great holes dug, by which somebody had tried to get down twenty or thirty feet, in order to get the fruit. The guide told Hafed that there was no certainty about these trees; and you could never tell what fruit a tree would happen to bear. The tree which this year

bears cucumbers, may bear potatoes next year, and perhaps you would have to dig twenty feet for every potatoe you obtained.

They soon met another of the 'chance-men'. His legs were very unequal in length, one had no knee, and the other no ankle. His ears were set upon his shoulders, and around his head was a thick, black bandage. He came groping his way, and Hafed at once asked him how long since he had lost his sight?

"I have not lost it," he said; "but when I was born, my eye-balls happened to be turned in instead of out, and the back parts being outward, are very painful in the light, and so I put on a covering."

"Well, but canst thou see any thing? Methinks thou mayest see strange things within."

"True, but the difficulty is to get any light in there. I have contrived various ways to do so—have had it poured into my ears and nose, but all will not do. Yet I am as well off as others. My brother has one good eye on the top of his head; but he only looks directly up with it to the clouds; and the sun almost puts it out. He shuts it most of the time during the day; but it happens to be one that will not stay shut, and so when he sleeps the flies trouble him badly. I have a sister who has nineteen eyes in her head; but they are a vexation. She sees eighteen things too many. Even now, she can't realize that she has not nineteen fathers, and as many mothers. She goes to bed, and falls on the floor nineteen times at least before she gets in. She goes to drink, and she sees nineteen cups, and knows not which is the real cup. But so it happened, and she is as well off as most in this 'chance world.' But after all, it is a glorious world, I do assure you."

"Wonderful," said Hafed.

As they proceeded a little further, they met a young lady.

"That young lady," said the guide, "is the greatest beauty in all these parts. All our young men are bewitched by her; and there have been not less than twenty duels on her account already. You will be amazed at seeing a being so perfect."

As they met, Hafed stared more fully than is usually considered polite among the Orientals. The beauty had a face not altogether unlike a human face, excepting that the mouth was under the chin, the eyes looked separate ways, and the color of the hair, was a mixture of red, light blue, white and yellow. One foot had the heel forward, and one arm was altogether wanting.

"Wonderful, wonderful, truly," cried Hafed. "Twenty duels! but I hope they were not all killed, were they?"

Here the beauty began to ogle, and mince in her steps most enchantingly.

"Killed!" said the guide; "you seem to know nothing about us. They all met and fought together; but as every thing goes here by chance, it is not often that we can get our powder to burn. In this case only one got his gun off at all, and that did not happen to go off till night, when he was going to bed, when it wounded his hand, which has been bleeding ever since."

"Ever since! How long ago was this? She did not look as if it could be done to-day."

"Oh, it was two years ago."

"Two years ago! and why don't you seek the leech, and have the poor boy saved from bleeding to death—even though he was a fool—for more reasons than one?"

"Ah! you don't understand it. Every thing goes by chance here; and there is only a chance that a man who is wounded will ever be healed. This is one of those cases in which he will never be healed."

"I don't understand it, truly," said Hafed.

They stopped to look at some 'chance-cattle' in a yard. Some had but three legs; some had the head on the wrong part of the body; some were covered with wool, under which they were sweltering in a climate always tropical. Some were half horse, half ox. One cow had a young dwarf of a camel following her, and claiming her for its mother. Young elephants were there, with flocks of sheep; horses with claws like a lion, and geese clamping round the yard with hoofs like horses. It was all the work of chance.

"This," said the guide, "is a choice collection of cattle; you never saw the like before."

"That is true—truth itself," cried Hafed.

"Ah! but the owner has been at almost infinite pains and expense to collect them. I don't believe there is another such collection any where in all this chance-world."

"I hope not," said Hafed.

Just as they were leaving the premises, the owner came out to admire and show, and talk over his treasures. He wanted to gaze at Hafed; but his head happened to be near the ground between his feet, so that he had to mount up on a wall, before he could get a fair view of the stranger.

"Don't think I am a happy man," said he to Hafed, "in having so many and such perfect animals. Alas! even in this happy and perfect world, there are always drawbacks. That fine-looking cow yonder, happens to give nothing but warm water for milk; and her calf, poor thing, died the first week. Some of them have good looking eyes, but from some defect, are stone blind. Some cannot live in the light, and few of them can hear. No two eat the same food, and it is a great labor to take care of them. I sometimes feel as if I had almost as lief be a poor man."

"I think I should rather," said Hafed.

While they were talking, in an instant, they were in midnight darkness. The sun was gone, and Hafed could not for some time see his guide.

"What has happened?" said he.

"Oh! nothing uncommon," said the guide. "The sun happened to go down now. There is no regular time for him to shine; but he goes and comes just as it happens, and leaves us as suddenly as you see."

"As I don't see," said Hafed; "but I hope he will come back at an appointed time, at any rate."

"That, sir, will be just as it happens. Sometimes he is gone for months, and sometimes for weeks, and sometimes only for a few minutes. Just as it happens. We may not see him again for months, but perhaps he will come soon."