

Kahlid the Kind

...Long ago, a traveler set out across the Sahara Desert, heading north from Timbuktu. Days passed, and he made steady progress on the road to Marrakech. On the eighth day, he encountered a ferocious sandstorm. The wind lashed him mercilessly and confused his sense of direction. When the storm was over, sand dunes stretched in every direction, and the traveler was lost. There was no shade, and his supplies had vanished in the storm. His tongue swelled and his lips cracked, and he cried out for water. Vultures circled slowly overhead. He wandered aimlessly until he fell to his knees, ready to die.

The traveler did not know it, but just over one of the dunes lay the oasis of Kahlid the Kind, who was known as the owner of the purest water and most generous heart in the desert. Kahlid regularly rode over the dunes in search of the lost and the forsaken. Just as the traveler was just about to close his eyes, he heard the sound of a camel. Kahlid lifted the traveler up and rode swiftly home with him.

Kahlid offered the traveler water and he drank gratefully. The traveler drank until his thirst was gone. At last he spoke: "Great is my fortune to have encountered Kahlid the Kind when Death's cold hand was upon my throat."

"It was the will of God that you should live. I am but his poor servant," Kahlid replied. "Now drink more, for truly you have not taken enough."

"I would, but of water I am full," the traveler said. "Now I feel a weakness and a great hunger. Might I have some food?"

"How can you think of food?" Kahlid asked. "It is water you need. Not so long ago you nearly died of thirst. So drink, and drink deeply."

"Kahlid, I am in your debt. But I have taken my fill of water and now I must eat." "I think the sun has addled your brain, my friend. You must drink more water or Death will claim you yet."

The traveler turned away when Kahlid offered him the ladle. Water spilled on the ground. Convinced that the man was insane, Kahlid swept him up and waded into the spring. He dunked his new friend's head repeatedly. The man choked and fought for air, swallowing great gulps of water. Kahlid was pleased.

The traveler began to weaken. Kahlid redoubled his efforts, holding the man under for longer periods to ensure that he would continue to drink. The traveler's strength eventually waned, and Death took him. He died in Kahlid's warm, powerful embrace.

Tears streaked down the face of Kahlid the Kind. "If only he had drunk a little more, he might have lived!" He buried the man near the oasis. It was not the only body Kahlid had laid to rest there. "Water, they must have water," he muttered as he mounted his camel and headed out into the desert.