

THE FIRST VOYAGE OF SINBAD THE SAILOR

I bought a large quantity of merchandise and made preparations for a long voyage. Then, with a company of traders, I set sail from Baghdad and journeyed many days from isle to isle, buying, selling and exchanging wherever we dropped anchor.

At last we came to a little island that seemed very beautiful. The passengers went ashore, lit fires, and were soon busy cooking and washing. Some began to eat, drink and be merry, whilst others set out to explore the Fair Isle. Suddenly the captain cried aloud from the ship,

"Come aboard speedily. Leave everything and run for your lives. God be with you, for this is no island, but a huge whale floating on the surface of the ocean. On its back sands have settled and trees have grown. The heat from your fires has awakened it. It will plunge below the surface and all will be lost."

Immediately, there was panic. Terrified visitors threw themselves into the sea. Those who could swam desperately towards the ship. There was a calm before the storm - the expected awakening of the great beast seemed not to occur. The panic subsided: could this really be a whale? Then, *slowly and gently, the 'ground' beneath those still on the 'island' began to rise and fall.* Then, without warning, the creature raised its back high out of the calm waters, catapulting all who were still standing, through the air and into the water beyond. The huge bulk came crashing down, sending plumes of water and foam high into the air, and engulfing the ship in a torrent of water.