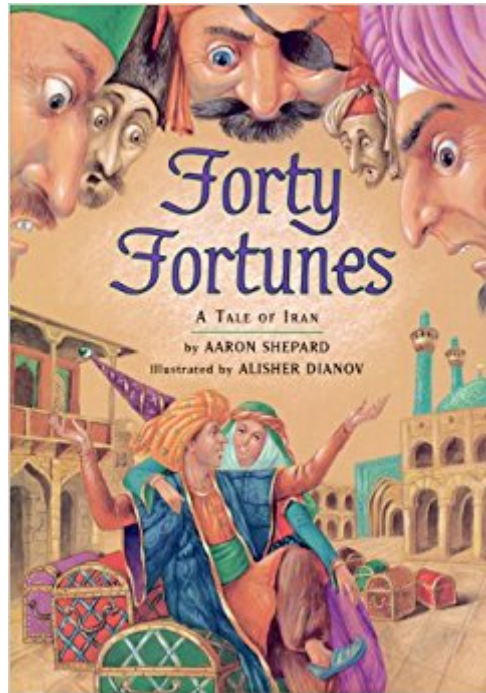




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# Forty Fortunes: A Tale Of Iran



## Synopsis

Ahmed is content with the living he can make with a pick and a shovel, but that isn't good enough for his wife Jamell. On her insistence, he finds himself sitting in the marketplace with the dice and board and robe of a fortuneteller. Imagine his surprise when what he tells his first client comes true! But soon Ahmed is in real peril, when the king calls upon him to discover the thieves of his royal treasure. On one hand is the king with his threat of prison -- on the other are the forty thieves who fear Ahmed will reveal them. Can anything save him now? Find out in this most popular folktale of the Islamic world.

TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS -- A READER'S THEATER SCRIPT OF THIS BOOK IS AVAILABLE IN AARON'S BOOK "FOLKTALES ON STAGE," OR FREE ON AARON'S WEB SITE.

Aaron Shepard is the award-winning author of "The Baker's Dozen," "The Sea King's Daughter," "The Adventures of Mouse Deer," and many more children's books. His stories have appeared often in Cricket magazine, while his Web site is known internationally as a prime resource for folktales, storytelling, and reader's theater.

Alisher Dianov began illustrating professionally at the age of 15 in his native Russia and now lives in the United States. He is also illustrator of Aaron's "The Enchanted Storks."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 2-4-Ahmed's wife, Jamell, is not satisfied with her humble existence, and insists that her husband become a fortune-teller to earn more money. Ahmed reluctantly agrees and, through a

stroke of luck, succeeds in solving the first problem put to him. When 40 treasure chests are stolen from the King and his diviners cannot determine the culprits, Ahmed is called in and threatened with life in prison should he fail. He buys some time by asking for 40 days, one for each thief. During that time, another stroke of luck allows him to discover the identity of the robbers, but it is Ahmed's ingenuity that brings the tale to its satisfying conclusion. Shepard's version of this story is a well-paced combination of humor and action. Watercolors in bright tones capture the amusing situations and accurately depict the setting. Shepard includes notes on his sources and other elements of the story. A reader's theater script and more information on divination and Iranian customs can be found at the author's Web site. A lively addition to folklore shelves. Grace Oliff, Ann Blanche Smith School, Hillsdale, NJ Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

~ "Shepard's version is a well-paced combination of humor and action. . . . A lively addition to folklore shelves." -- Grace Oliff, School Library Journal, Aug. 1999~ "An exotic cast of characters, humorously depicted in jewel-toned illustrations, keeps readers intently involved. Shepard's talent for language that flows trippingly off the tongue and his appreciation of Middle East humor make this ideal for reading aloud. The action and fun never stop." -- Jan Lieberman, TNT, Spring 2000~ "This retelling of a traditional Iranian folktale has charm and wit, plus brilliant jewel-tone illustrations." -- Family Literacy Center~ "Tight-paced humor keeps the pages turning, while Dianov's art begs to slow them down. Teachers will appreciate the author's note." -- Tricia Gardella, The Union Democrat, Nov. 26, 1999~ "A good folklore book for classroom or family." -- San Diego State University Children's Literature Program Book Review Service~ "A charmer. . . . The colorful, humorous illustrations make a perfect match for a tale of false assumptions and surprising twists. The telling is smooth and funny, a delight to read. Notes at the end give sources and some information about Persian social history. Of its genre, this book stands close to the top." -- Elsa Marston, MultiCultural Review, June 2000~ "Entertaining as well as educational. . . . Gives the reader an insight into Iranian customs and beliefs." -- Kathy Ketter, Roving Reviewers, Apr. 2001~ //////////////////////////////////~ SAMPLE~ That evening, when Ahmed handed her his wages for the day, she said, "Look at these few measly coins! I won't put up with this any longer. Tomorrow you'll sit in the marketplace and be a diviner!"~ "Jamell, are you insane?" said Ahmed. "What do I know about fortunetelling?"~ "You don't need to know a thing," said Jamell. "When anyone brings you a question, you just throw the dice and mumble something that sounds wise. It's either that, or I go home to the house of my father!"~ So the next day, Ahmed sold his shovel and his pick and bought the dice and the board and the robe of a fortuneteller. Then he sat in the

marketplace near the public bath. "Hardly had he gotten settled when there ran up to him the wife of one of the King's ministers. "Diviner, you must help me! I wore my most precious ring to the bath today, and now it's missing. Please, tell me where it is!" Ahmed gulped and cast the dice. As he desperately searched for something wise to say, he happened to glance up at the lady's cloak. There he spied a small hole, and showing through the hole, a bit of her naked arm. Of course, this was quite improper for a respectable lady, so Ahmed leaned forward and whispered urgently, "Madam, I see a hole." "A what?" asked the lady, leaning closer. "A hole! A hole!" The lady brightened. "Of course! A hole!" She rushed back to the bath and found the hole in the wall where she had hidden her ring for safekeeping. Then she came back out to Ahmed. "God be praised!" she said. "You knew right where it was!" And to Ahmed's amazement, she gave him a gold coin. That evening, when Jamell saw the coin and heard the story, she said, "You see? There's nothing to it!" "God was merciful on this day," said Ahmed, "but I dare not test Him on another!" "Nonsense," said Jamell. "If you want to keep your wife, you'll be back in the marketplace tomorrow."

This is a great story! Some adults that I shared the story with enjoyed the book a great deal and I look forward to using it in my classrooms!

This book is colorfully illustrated with lots of funny looking characters and is set in an enchanting city. The book is a pleasant read for kids at bedtime and I recommend it. It was a nice touch to see the page titled "how to say the names" with the phonetic equivalents written next to them - as we know many names can be mispronounced. However, it was disappointing to see that they made a typo on the phonetic equivalent word for IRAN! It says eer-ON instead of ee-RON. I hope they correct this mistake if there is a reprint.

Excellent English translation of the folk story. I have heard a couple of other versions of this story when I was growing up in Iran. It was a (very) pleasant surprise to see that the story has been translated. The illustrations are remarkable. You can see the old Persian architecture, the costumes, the robes and turbans, yet the characters are cartoonish and extremely funny. I hope to see more Persian folk stories by the author and illustrator.

This book is wonderful. I love the way Alisher Dianov illustrates his children's books. This book would be a fine addition to any library, child or adult.

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