

"It is related that there was a very old fisherman who had a wife and three daughters and who was so poor that they did not have even enough food for the day. One day ... he went out with his net at the call for the early morning prayers. ... He cast his net and waited for it to sink; then he gathered the rope and started to pull. ... When he pulled, he found that it was so heavy that he was unable to haul it. He shook it and found that it was caught at the bottom. Saying, "There is no power or strength save in God, the Almighty, the Magnificent," he took off his clothes and dove for the net. He worked at it until he managed to free it, and as he hauled it to the shore, he felt there was something heavy inside. ... and found a large long-necked brass jar, with a lead stopper. ... [He decided to sell the jar, but it was so heavy that he couldn't move it. So he took out the lead stopper.]

[F]rom the jar [came] a great column of smoke, which rose and spread over the face of the earth, increasing so much that it covered the sea and rising so high that it reached the clouds. ... Then it gathered and took shape, and suddenly it shook and there stood a demon, with his feet on the ground and his head in the clouds. He had a head like a tomb, fangs like pincers, a mouth like a cave, teeth like stones, nostrils like trumpets, ears like shields, a throat like an alley, and eyes like lanterns. In short, all one can say is that he was a hideous monster. When the fisherman saw him, he shook with terror. ...

[The fisherman spoke to the demon.] The demon replied, "Make a wish! The fisherman was happy and asked, "What shall I wish from you?" The demon replied, "Tell me how you wish to die, and what manner of death you wish me to choose. ..." [The fisherman was very upset. He tried to talk the demon out of killing him, but the demon was determined. Finally, the fisherman decided to trick the demon.]

[T]he fisherman said, "By the Almighty name [of God], tell me whether you really were inside this jar." The demon replied, "By the Almighty name, I was imprisoned in this jar." The fisherman said, "You are lying, for this jar is not large enough, not even for your hands and feet. How can it be large enough for your whole body?" The demon replied, "By God, I was inside. Don't you believe that I was inside it?" The fisherman said, "No, I don't." Whereupon the demon shook himself and turned into smoke. ... And, little by little, began to enter the jar. ...

The fisherman at once took out the sealed lead stopper and hurriedly clamped it on the mouth of the jar. ... Realizing that the fisherman had tricked him, the demon said, "Fisherman, don't do this to me. I was only joking with you." The fisherman replied, "You are lying, you the dirtiest and meanest of demons," and began to roll the jar toward the sea. ...

-Unknown, "The Story of the Fisherman and the Demon from The Arabian Nights"
(original written in 9th-10th century; copied in 14th century; translated in 1990) excerpt.