I was running. Faster than I had ever run before. Behind me, four giant bullet ants followed at an incredible pace. Surprisingly, I had never been chased by bullet ants seeking to kill me before. The mandibles they had looked incredibly sharp – they had aimed them threateningly at me before I ran off to escape into the jungle. I did not know what they were going to do and I did not even think about asking them! I knew my words would fall on deaf ears since I could not speak in the language of bullet ants.

The sun had now set, its fire extinguished. Instead, my lungs were ablaze. My body was crying out for me to stop but my mind convinced it otherwise.

“Stop now and you are a dead man,” I thought to myself. Looking ahead, I only saw more trees. The enormous ants were certainly closing in on me.

“Allah, surely this is not what you want for me?” I cried out in desperation. “I have followed you and I have worshipped you. Save me now! I beg of you!”

In that exact moment, a ravenous anteater leapt out of the thick foliage and snatched one of my pursuers. Its high-pitched shrieks indicated to me that it was doomed to die. The other ants slowed momentarily but did not stop. This gave me an extra second. Above me, a colourful, immense parrot flew past, swooping suddenly to my left. My eyes followed it and I clutched at its claws as it glided past me. As I clung on to the bird with all my strength, I noticed that it was heading toward a break in the trees that lead to a mountainside. A cave?

“Praise be to Allah! Mercy! Thank you!” I cried out. In that moment, I darted into the opening and was plunged into darkness…

………..

As the sun rose once more over the minarets and towers of Baghdad, the whole of Arabia seemed to sparkle in its fantastic, orange glow. It was a glorious morning. As she finished her tale, Sharazade spoke softly to her husband who lay beside her.

“That concludes the story of Mr Rimell and the Gigantic Bullet Ants, my husband,” she whispered. “It must surely be time for you to take my head?”

“No, wife. It is not. I demand another story from you,” snapped King Shahyrar.

“Another? Are you not weary of hearing my tales?” she replied softly.

“I am not. I must know what happens next. Tell me,” the King demanded.

“As you wish, my wise and benevolent king,” agreed Sharazade. “Then I shall regale you with the fantastical tale of Freddie and the Monstrous Sunfish”. Her voice travelled as smoothly as a graceful swan moves across water. The king looked at his wife, entirely captivated by her storytelling. His eyes followed her mouth and her words, spellbound by the journey she was taking him on…