

Excerpt from *In Servitude* by Heleen Kist

A tailor's dummy stood beside me, draped with colourful scarves that reflected the sunset in shimmering patterns, as if calling for my attention. I ran both hands through the soft fibres, creating dancing shadows on the wall and releasing a smell that punched me in the lungs, calling up a memory so vivid that I became light-headed.

Glory's young voice.

'Look at me! I'm Scheherazade!'

Loose strands of long red hair enveloped her face as she twirled around, her hands waving multi-coloured strips of fabric in fluid, hypnotising motions along her eleven-year-old body. She bounced towards me, covering her nose and mouth, batting her eyelashes in cartoon-style seduction. 'Oh Aladdin, my hero! Shall I dance the dance of the seven veils for you?'

'Stop it, Glory.' I grabbed the so-called veils she'd been dangling in front of my face, too close. 'Plus, that wasn't Scheherazade. I'm fairly sure the dance of the seven veils was Salome.'

Glory shrugged and kept the choreography going. 'I don't care. It's exotic! And foreign! And marvellous!' Each phrase was punctuated by a defiant jiggle of the hips.

'And a little blasphemous,' I said, failing to suppress a large grin.

'Okay, miss party-pooper. Your turn to do something with this.'

She heaped the mix of polyester, silk and cotton we'd rescued from our parents' store onto my head and sat on the ground. Bright blues beaming in anticipation.

'Fine, Salome. You think you're so sexy. Well, you've got another think coming.' I wrapped layer upon layer over my shoulders and across my waist, waiting for the inspiration that came so easily to her.

Once I could move no more for the bulk, I plonked my elbows on my side and stood legs apart like a superhero, bellowing, 'For I am...Heidi!' My heart leapt as her unrestrained laughter filled the room. 'And I am on my way to meet my own man...' I paused, basking in my sister's approval, while I searched for that goatherd boy's name—or any goatherd name. She roared as I broke into song instead. 'High on the hill lived a lonely goatherd, yodelay-hee yodelay-hee yodelay-hee hoo!'

'Oh Grace, you're so funny,' she said, then launched into yodels that merged into mine. And I wished it would last forever.