

ARABIAN NIGHTS

An original play script written by Ellen Johnston McHenry
(c) 2014

Running time: a little over 2.5 hours

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You can contact Ellen at: ejm.basementworkshop@gmail.com**

NOTE: Though this script is an original piece of writing by Ellen McHenry, every effort was made to stay as true as possible to the original texts (as translated into English). Endless hours of research and reading were done before and during the writing of this script. Many versions of the tales were compared, so the versions presented here hopefully represent “the best of the best” and will give you, the modern reader, an experience that approximates how the ancient audiences heard the tales.

MOVIE RECOMMENDATION/COMMENTS:

The best video presentation of the tales is probably Hallmark's *Arabian Nights* filmed in 2000, starring Mili Avital. Do note, however, that some liberties were taken with remodeling the plot to suit modern viewers, especially in the frame tale about the caliph to whom the stories were told. The adaptations are actually pretty good, though, and make the movie a real treat for the modern Western viewer. The harshness of ancient Eastern society is softened quite a bit (The movie contains a story not found in this script: *The Hunchback Jester*. I very much wanted to put this story in the script, but was unable to. The movie version is delightful.)

In general, this play script is more faithful to the original stories than the movie is. If there is a discrepancy between what you read here and the Hallmark movie, assume this script to be closer to the original text.

USE AS READER'S THEATER:

If performing this play is out of the question, consider using it as Reader's Theater in a classroom setting. Often, young people will enjoy this option just as much as actual performance. Students who would be too shy to get on stage will be willing to stay in their seats and just read lines. You can even add some costume pieces here and there (some hats?) to add to the fun. Also, try assigning someone to do sound effects!

A perk to using it as Reader's Theater is that you can have students read multiple parts without any fear of confusing the audience. Since the script can't be done in one sitting, you also have the option of switching readers each day and giving multiple students a chance to play Shahrazad and the king, or other major roles.

IF THE PLAY RUNS TOO LONG:

If you intend to perform this play and the running time is just too long, I suggest cutting "The Story of the Three Swindlers." It's a nice story, but if you have to cut one, this is probably the one to cut. This will cut it by 15 minutes or so.

BACKGROUND:

The 1001 Nights is Asia's equivalent to Europe's *Canterbury Tales*. Both are collections of folk tales that have existed in the oral traditions of their cultures for hundreds (or even thousands) of years. In the case of the *Canterbury Tales*, these stories were collected and retold by one author, Geoffrey Chaucer, at the beginning of the Renaissance (the early 1300s). The collection of stories found in *1001 Nights* was started by an unknown author in the 800s AD, and continued by a series of unknown authors all the way up to Chaucer's time (the 1300s).

The tales in *1001 Nights* can be traced back to the folklore of Egypt, India, Persia, and Arabia, with possible Greek and Jewish influences as well. The animal stories are generally from India. The stories about caliphs are based on historical figures from the early days of the Islamic empire from 650-800. Egyptian influences go back as far as the Epic of Gilgamesh, from about 2000 B.C.

The first European to translate the tales was Antoine Galland, who translated them into French in 1704. It was in this French translation that two of the most famous stories first appear: "Aladdin's Lamp" and "Ali Baba." Galland admitted that these tales were not in any of the ancient manuscripts. These stories had been told to him by a Syrian storyteller and he took the liberty of adding them to the collection himself.

Despite their popularity all over Europe, it wasn't until 1840 that the *1001 Nights* were officially translated into English. The first translator, Edward Lane, produced a version suitable for his Victorian audience, omitting anything that was even the slightest bit offensive. In the late 1800s, several British authors decided that Lane's version was not only too prudish but also unfaithful to the original texts. So they produced their own versions, the most famous one by Richard Burton in 1885. Burton, however, didn't just translate the tales word for word; he couldn't resist adding his own racy embellishments, making his version so shocking to the general public that it was only available on the black market. Some critics maintain that Burton's version is so far off from the original that it should not be considered a true translation. Burton published the tales in a series of 10 volumes, followed by 10 more supplemental volumes.

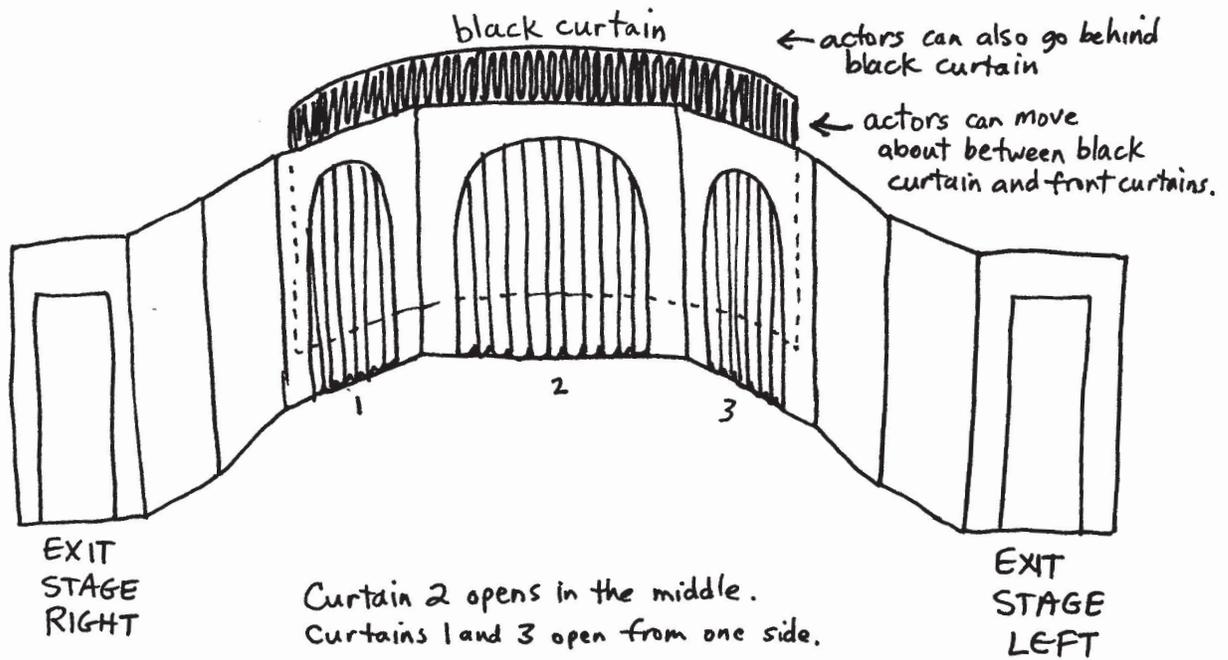
There have been several other English translations of the tales produced since Lane's version. The most recent English translation was by Husain Haddaway in 1990, based on an Arabic translation of a Syrian manuscript dating back to the 1400s (the one Galland used for his French translation). However, there is no agreement among scholars that this version of the tales is the "correct" one. There have been so many versions of the tales over so many centuries that it is impossible to say which collection is the most historically accurate. Each country had its own selection of tales that it considered to be the "1001 Nights" ("*Layla Alf Layla*").

Any young person wishing to read the tales for themselves should consider the version by Andrew Lang, first written in 1898, and published many times since then, most recently in 1991. For a very contemporary version, written (and embellished) specifically for young people of the 21st century, try Geraldine McCaughrean's "One Thousand and One Arabian Nights" published by Oxford University Press in 1982. Adults should preview any version of the tales they give to their young readers. As already mentioned, some of the versions, (such as Burton's, which is readily available at bookstores), contain tales that would be rated R if they were movies (maybe R+ on a few of them). Many of the tales are innocent and charming, but sprinkled in are some that are pretty lewd. Be forewarned!

The stories in this script:

This script uses a few tales found in all versions of the tales (*The Ox and the Donkey*, *The Fisherman and the Genie*, *King Yunan and his Physician*), several stories that appear in most versions (*The Bottomless Bag*, *The Stolen Donkey*, *The Enchanted Horse*), the additions by Galland (*Ali Baba and Aladdin*) as well as several stories that are rather more obscure and were difficult to track down (*The Rotten Shoes*, *The Three Swindlers*). I would have liked to include *The Story of the Hunchback Jester*, which is found in all versions of the tales, but was a bit difficult to stage and since the play was already running long, it had to be omitted.

The stage directions will make more sense if you look at this little sketch. You don't have to use this stage plan, but this shows you how the play was originally staged. The bedroom furniture was placed towards the front of the stage, so that the tales were performed in the little "cove" area created by the curtain flats. (Only the tale actors go in and out of the curtains.)



(Aladin's Cave was set behind curtain 2.)

CAST

FRAME TALE:

King Shahriyar (*SHAH-ree-yar*)
Shah Zaman, Shahriyar's younger brother
The Vizier (father of Shahrazad and Dunyazad)
Shahrazad
Dunyazad
Shahriyar's first queen
Some young girls
Two guards
Any number of palace attendants
Two ambassadors from Kashmir

Note about the spellings of the names:

Some of the names (Shahrazad, for example) can be spelled several ways. Each translator took the Arabic letters and tried to figure out the English equivalent. Since Arabic script does not usually contain vowels, and since there are many Arabic dialects, this makes it possible to come up with more than one possibility for how to translate the Arabic letters. You will find a variety of spellings if you read various translations of the tales. The names of the characters in the "frame tale" are consistent with those used in the Penguin Classic version (c) 2008.

THE STORY OF THE OX AND THE DONKEY

Ox
Donkey
Plowman

THE STORY OF THE FISHERMAN AND THE GENIE

Fisherman
Genie

THE STORY OF KING YUNAN AND PHYSICIAN DUBAN

King Yunan
Physician Duban
Sage 1
Sage 2
Ambassador 1
Ambassador 2
Two guards, and an executioner
Any number of extra sages or courtiers

THE STORY OF THE ROTTEN SHOES

Abu Kaseem
Ahmed, Abu Kaseem's friend (*can double as servant or neighbor*)
Magistrate
Two servants of magistrate
Bath attendant (*can double as neighbor or as fisherman*)
Woman and child (*child does not speak*) (*woman can double as injured woman*)
Two women (one speaks) (*can double as neighbors*)
Fisherman
Three neighbors
Woman who gets injured (*does not speak*) (*can be one of the neighbors*)

ALI BABA

Ali Baba

Ali Baba's wife

Kasim

Kasim's wife

Marjana, Ali Baba's servant

Hassan, leader of the thieves

Any number of thieves, several of whom will have a line or two

A small group of townspeople, one of whom will speak

THE BOTTOMLESS BAG

Magistrate

Ali

Swindler (who will become swindler 1 in the next story)

Townspeople, one of whom will speak a line

THE STOLEN DONKEY

Swindler 1 (the swindler in the previous story)

Swindler 2

Owner of donkey

Donkey

THE THREE SWINDLERS

Swindler 1 (same as swindler in "The Bottomless Bag")

Swindler 2 (same as second swindler in "The Stolen Donkey")

Swindler 3

King

Vizier

Executioner

King's mother

Owner of horse

ALADDIN AND THE MAGIC LAMP

Aladdin

A group of children (non-speaking roles)

Aladdin's mother

African magician

Genie of the lamp

The sultan

The sultan's vizier

The princess

The sultan's attendants (non-speaking roles)

Female servant (sells the lamp to the magician)

Two guards

Mother

Child

People of the town (absolute minimum 3 actors, but can accommodate up to a dozen or 14)

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

King Shahriyar is sitting on his throne (or on an elegant collection of cushions), with his queen and a few of her attendants. Two guards are on either side of the doors at stage left and right. The Vizier enters and announces the arrival of Shahriyar's brother. If no curtain is being used, have the king enter from stage right, followed by his queen, her attendants, and finally the Vizier. (You might want to play some appropriate background music while they are entering.)

General note for all women, servants, guards, and Vizier: Never turn your back on the king. Exits should be made backing out while still facing the king.

VIZIER: Your royal highness, according to your wishes, your royal brother, Shah Zaman of Samarkand has arrived to see you.

SHAHRIYAR: Thank you, my faithful Vizier. Bring him at once. I have been longing to see my younger brother for several years now. I somewhat regret sending him to rule Samarkand. It's so far away!

Shah Zaman enters from stage right.

SHAHRIYAR: *(gets up as Shah Zaman comes over to greet him)* My dear brother! Peace be upon you! How was your journey?

SHAH ZAMAN: Peace also to you. Very well, thank you. *(Then addressing the queen...)* And greetings also to my dear sister-in-law.

Queen nods to him from behind her veil.

SHAHRIYAR: Dearest brother, please come and sit beside me. I have been longing to speak with you. *(Shah Zaman sits near Shahriyar.)* Two years is far too long for brothers to be apart. But you look pale and weary, my brother. Is all well in your faraway kingdom of Samarkand?

SHAH ZAMAN: All is well. I do my best to follow my older brother's example and govern with a firm hand, yet not without justice.

SHAHRIYAR: You have come alone. Was your queen unable to travel? How is my dear sister-in-law?

SHAH ZAMAN: *(quickly changes the subject)* I have brought you gifts, my brother. Vizier! Send in my servants with my gifts!

Vizier opens door at stage right and shows servants in. At least two servants, but possibly more, enter with large boxes. Two or more dancing girls also enter (to be given as gifts). Then the Vizier stands by the door at stage left.

SHAH ZAMAN: Please accept these humble tokens of my loyalty and my brotherly affection.

The servants set down the boxes and open the lids. They pull out some kind of trinkets (also could add exotic-looking fabrics or animal skins) and hold them up for Shahriyar to see.

SHAHRIYAR: *(addressing the servants casually)* Yes, very nice. Carry them to my treasury.

The servants with the gifts exit stage left.

SHAH ZAMAN: Your highness, do these gifts meet with your approval? *(indicating the dancing girls)*

SHAHRIYAR: *(gets up and walks over to examine the girls)* Hmm...I don't think I have any women from Samarkand in my harem. They'll make a splendid addition.

This is where you may put in a dance scene. If you do not intend to include a dance scene, skip this section and pick up where it says "after the dance scene."

SHAH ZAMAN: Would you like to see them dance?

SHAHRIYAR: Yes! *(then turns to the Vizier.)* Vizier, bring refreshments!

VIZIER: *(simply waves his hand in servants direction)* Refreshments!

The servants retrieve the refreshments waiting backstage (from stage left or right) and begin serving them to the two kings.

The music begins and the girls dance. Shahriyar's female servants might also join in the dance.

Shah Zaman does not seem to be enjoying the entertainment very much. Shahriyar is having a great time but notices his brother's attitude. As the music ends...

SHAHRIYAR: Wonderful! I will allow all of you to join my harem. Vizier, take them to their quarters!
The Vizier shows the ladies out the door on stage left. The Vizier then stands at the door on stage left.

After the dance scene:

If you skipped the refreshments during the dance scene, now is the time to have the servants bring in the refreshments while the two kings seat themselves and begin to talk.

SHAH ZAMAN: I have missed the exquisite delicacies of my homeland. The food of Samarkand is not so fine. And the water is even worse.

SHAHRIYAR: Is that why you look so pale?

There is an awkward pause. Shahriyar looks at Shah Zaman.

SHAH ZAMAN: I am in the best of health.

SHAHRIYAR: What is wrong, then?

SHAH ZAMAN: What do you mean?

SHAHRIYAR: I know you, little brother. You cannot hide your thoughts from me. Something is troubling you. What is it?

SHAH ZAMAN: Nothing is wrong.

SHAHRIYAR: Do not lie to me! I command you to tell me your grief!

SHAH ZAMAN: Brother, I cannot.

SHAHRIYAR: You must. I command it!

Shah Zaman is still silent.

SHAHRIYAR: Has there been an assassination attempt?

SHAH ZAMAN: No.

SHAHRIYAR: Embezzlement from the treasury?

SHAH ZAMAN: No.

SHAHRIYAR: The queen is sick?

SHAH ZAMAN: No. *(a pause)* Worse. *(pause)* The queen is.....dead.

SHAHRIYAR: *(quite affected by this news)* When? How?

There is an awkward silence.

SHAH ZAMAN: *(very matter-of-factly)* I killed her.

SHAHRIYAR: For what?

SHAH ZAMAN: *(He jumps up and displays outrage.)* Infidelity!

SHAHRIYAR: With whom?

SHAH ZAMAN: I found her in the arms of... of a worthless kitchen slave! A kitchen slave! A greasy, low-born kitchen slave! Spitting in my face in front of the entire kingdom would have been less insulting than this vile deed!

SHAHRIYAR: So what did you do?

ZAMAN: I cut both of them in half with one stroke of my sword. *(He pulls out his scimitar, raises it up and crashes it down.)* Like that!

Everyone on stage winces and turns their heads away. A servant is mid-stage with a tray, headed for the two kings. He almost drops the tray (make sure the food is secured!).

SHAHRIYAR: *(in disbelief)* You cut her in half?

SHAH ZAMAN: With this very blade. *(he says this slowly as he strokes the flat of the blade)*

SERVANT: *(humbly approaching the kings and queen)* Pardon the interruption your highnesses. The chef has sent a special dish for the kings and the queen.

The kings compose themselves and attend to the refreshment tray. There are three dishes on the tray, with one special dish intended for the queen only, because in this dish is hidden a secret message. The following dialogue will be written for shish-kabobs, but at the director's discretion the lines can be adapted to suit another type of food. The servant hands a kabob to each of the kings and to the queen.

SHAHRIYAR: Ah shish-kabobs—one of my favorite dishes. No one makes better kabobs than my royal chef does. This one smells like spicy lamb and beef. *(Then to Zaman, who is just holding his plate:)* Eat, Zaman. We can continue with your story after you have been refreshed by a hearty meal. *(Leans over to queen and peers at her kabob.)* What do you have on yours? *(Looks at kabob strangely for a moment.)* What's that?

QUEEN: It's lettuce.

SHAHRIYAR: It's white.

QUEEN: It's white lettuce.

SHAHRIYAR: I've never heard of white lettuce. Can I have a bite? I'll trade you my kabob for yours.

Queen draws herself and her kabob away from the king. The king pursues.

SHAHRIYAR: Let me see the white lettuce! *(He reaches for it but the queen draws it away.)*

The king succeeds in getting the kabob from her and pulls off the "white lettuce." It's a folded paper note.

SHAHRIYAR: This is a piece of paper!

As he starts to unfold the note the queen grabs it. At the director's discretion she can either try to eat it or stuff it down her shirt or stick it somewhere.

SHAHRIYAR: Guards!

The guards come over and each grab one of the queen's arm, disabling her. The note is dangling from one hand (or lips?). The king goes over and plucks the note from her hand. He slowly unfolds it.

SHAHRIYAR: *(reading the note)* "Dearest love. I hope you enjoyed your kabob. I made it specially for you. Meet me in the kitchen tonight at midnight." *(Shahriyar realizes the import of this message, takes a second to process it, then reacts violently.)*

You, too?! And with my cook? A greasy shish-kabob-maker who stinks like fish and onions?! Guards! Take the queen out of my presence immediately! Then fetch my chef and take both of them to the executioner. And make sure they die at precisely midnight!

The guards escort the queen out of the door at stage left. The others on stage (except for the Vizier) slowly and discretely leave the stage at stage right, leaving the kings alone to wallow in their sorrow. The Vizier stands (or sits) by the door (or on a bench) at stage right.

SHAHRIYAR: *(turns in grief to his brother)* Oh brother Zaman, what has the world come to?

SHAH ZAMAN: Women cannot be trusted, Shahriyar. I learned that lesson and now you have, too.

SHAHRIYAR: Women are evil, Zaman.

SHAH ZAMAN: Women are traitors, Shahriyar, every one of them. As soon as you turn your back on them, they betray you!

SHAHRIYAR: Oh, Zaman, what are we to do? We must never marry ever again.

SHAH ZAMAN: No more queens, Shahriyar. Never another queen!

SHAHRIYAR: But you know that's not really possible, Zaman. You know we are expected to have a queen.

SHAH ZAMAN: But we can't. They'll betray us. They'll plot against us! They'll murder us in our beds some night!

SHAHRIYAR: So what are we to do, Zaman?

SHAH ZAMAN: I don't know. But I do know that you can't trust a woman for more than a day.

SHAHRIYAR: A day! *(a pause, as he thinks about what he just said)* Only one day, Zaman. You can only trust a woman for one day. That's what I am going to do! I'm going to have a new queen every day! I'll marry her in the morning of one day and have her executed at dawn the next day. I will always have a queen at my side—just a different one each day!

SHAH ZAMAN: My brother, will this not cause grief in your kingdom? Where will you find fathers willing to give up their daughters to certain death?

SHAHRIYAR: I'll let my Vizier work out the details. *(waves his hand in the Vizier's direction)* He's the wisest man in my kingdom. He'll think of something. Come, Zaman, life isn't so bad. Let us sit in the garden and enjoy the sunshine!

The kings exit at stage left.

SCENE 2

The VIZIER staggers to center stage and begins pacing back and forth, very nervously, perhaps adding other body or hand gestures that indicate nervousness or agitation.

VIZIER: The king wants me to order the execution of an innocent woman every day for the rest of his life? He has gone insane! What am I to do? What am I to do?

Shahrazad and Dunyazad have enter from stage right.

SHAHRAZAD: Father, what troubles you?

VIZIER: Oh, my daughters, a terrible curse has come upon the citizens our kingdom.

DUNYAZAD: A real curse? Did a genie appear?

VIZIER: No, Dunyazad, not a fairy tale curse—a real one. The king has decreed that he shall have a new

queen every day for the rest of his life.

DUNYAZAD: That's a lot of queens. He'll have to build an extra palace.

VIZIER: He won't need to. There will never be more than one queen. He plans on marrying a queen one day and executing her the next. Every day a new queen.

SHAHRAZAD: And every day another bereaved family. A mother grieving for her daughter. A father frantic to find a way to turn back time by just 24 hours in order to save his daughter from her unlucky fate.

VIZIER: And a Vizier breaking under the weight of his obligation to carry out the king's orders.

SHAHRAZAD: The kingdom will be in revolt before long. The people won't stand for this.

VIZIER: And they'll blame me as much as the king.

SHAHRAZAD: Your life will be in danger.

VIZIER: And yours, also. Especially you, Shahrazad. You are old enough to be eligible for marriage. The king may take notice and demand that I give you to him.

DUNYAZAD: Father, don't let the king take Shahrazad from me!

SHAHRAZAD: Dunyazad, don't worry. We'll think of something.

DUNYAZAD: Shahrazad, I wish we had a magic genie right now, just like the one in that story you told me last night. Then we could just wish that the king would change his mind and the genie would wave his hand and grant our wish and POOF! everything would be happy again. Why can't genies be real? We need a genie.

SHAHRAZAD: Dunyazad, you know how tricky genies can be. They are as fickle as the weather. One day sun, the next day rain. Even if we did have one, things might not turn out so well.

VIZIER: Shahrazad, hush with your nonsense. Silly stories aren't what we need right now. We're talking about serious matters.

DUNYAZAD: I still think we need a genie.

SHAHRAZAD: You're right, Dunyazad, a genie is exactly what we need right now, and I'm going to see to it that we get one.

DUNYAZAD: Shahrazad, can you do that?!

SHAHRAZAD: Father, I have a plan. *(pause)* I must be the king's next bride.

VIZIER: What?

SHAHRAZAD: You heard me correctly. I wish to be married to the king.

VIZIER: What is this? I cannot believe my ears! Perhaps the king's madness is contagious and you have contracted it? No, my daughter, I am going to send you and your sister to a secret hiding place until the king regains his senses.

SHAHRAZAD: Father, don't worry. I know what I am doing.

VIZIER: Madmen are unpredictable. How can you be sure that your plan will work?

SHAHRAZAD: I insist on trying, father. I can save the lives of many innocent young women and also prevent a violent uprising among the citizens.

VIZIER: Shahrazad, it's not that I do not trust you. It's only that I know that even the best of plans can backfire. You may become like the donkey in "The Story of The Ox and The Donkey."

DUNYAZAD: I don't know that story, father. What happens to the donkey?

(By this point, the set piece (stalls) for the ox and they donkey should have been brought on stage.)

SCENE 3

THE STORY OF THE OX AND THE DONKEY

Enter donkey and ox from curtain 2. They take their places in front of their stalls. The donkey should look like he is at ease and comfortable. The ox should look discontented.

VIZIER: Once there was merchant who owned an ox and a donkey. The merchant sent the ox out every day to plow the fields from sunrise to sunset, while the donkey's only work was to carry his master into town every other day. One day the ox came into the stable exhausted from a long day of plowing the fields. When he saw that the donkey had done nothing that day, he said...

OX: You and your life of luxury! You lie there in your neat and tidy stall all day, eating fresh hay and barley and drinking cool, clean water, while I am out pulling a heavy plow in the hot sun, almost dying of the heat. My neck is bruised from pulling that accursed plow. When they finally put me in my stable, well after dark, they give me only dried beans mixed with mud and chaff. And my water is almost as dirty as my stable floor. Life is so unfair!

DONKEY: Well, my friend, it's not my fault you were born an ox. That's what oxen do—they plow. Donkeys

are not fit for plowing. You should be proud to be an ox. You are a sincere and stalwart fellow, working all day to supply the needs of others. You have a robust disposition and endure your tasks with patience and fortitude. And as far as the menu is concerned, last night you chowed down those beans without a complaint. In fact, you bellowed for more. If you hate your life as much as you say you do, here's my advice to you. While you are plowing tomorrow, try to act weak and sick. Then, when the plowman brings you back to your stall tomorrow night, don't eat your beans. Give them a sniff, then step back and refuse to eat them. Maybe the plowman will get the hint that you're not happy. Perhaps then your life will change for the better.

VIZIER: The ox listened to the donkey and was sure that the donkey had given him good advice.

OX: Thank you, my friend. I will try that and see if it works.

Plowman enters from curtain 2.

VIZIER: The next day the ox went out to work in the fields as usual.

PLOWMAN: Come on, old boy, the sun is up already. We've got lots of work ahead of us. *(Both exit.)*

VIZIER: The ox did his best to look weak and weary that day. He walked at half his normal pace and intentionally stumbled and fell many times while plowing. That evening, when the plowman brought the ox back to the stable, *(the ox and plowman come back into the stable)* the ox refused to eat. He sniffed his beans, took three steps backward, and laid down.

PLOWMAN: What's the matter, old boy?

OX: Aouuu! Aouuu!

PLOWMAN: Do you have a stomachache? Maybe you'll feel better in the morning. Meanwhile, I'd better go and tell the master about this. Perhaps the master will know what to do. *(He exits.)*

VIZIER: So the plowman went and told the master about the ox's strange behavior that day. When he came back to the stable the next morning, he had astonishing news.

PLOWMAN: Well, Mr. Ox, it looks like you have the day off. The master says to harness Mr. Donkey today and make him do your work.

DONKEY: What?!! Me? I'm not an ox—I can't plow! I'm a weakling! I'll die!

PLOWMAN: Master's orders. Come on, let's go!

Plowman leads donkey off stage through curtain 2. Donkey continues to protest.)

VIZIER: So the donkey had to do the ox's work while the ox spent a quiet and restful day in his stall.

OX: Ah... I get to be a donkey today. This is the life! I think I'll have a taste of his hay and barley. That donkey really gives good advice. God bless him! *(Ox goes over to donkey's stall and begins to eat out of the donkey's feed trough.)*

VIZIER: Yes, the ox had a wonderful day, but I'm sorry to say that the donkey did not have a good day. The work of an ox was not suited to him and by nightfall he was so weary he could hardly stand up. The plow chaffed and bruised his neck and his backside was raw from the plowman's whip.

Enter plowman and donkey from curtain 2. Plowman exits as soon as donkey heads for his stable.

OX: Good evening, donkey. I must say, you give excellent advice.

Donkey staggers over to his stable, obviously in very bad shape.

DONKEY: You... you lousy rotten ox, you! If it weren't for your miserable complaining I wouldn't be in this condition. Because of you, every muscle and bone in my body is aching. If I have to go out there again tomorrow, I'll die!

OX: *(obviously unconcerned)* Hard work, is it? What a pity. I must say, I rather enjoyed my day as a donkey. What a great life you have! I think I'll do this every day.

VIZIER: And so, Shahrazad, you see how the donkey made a terrible miscalculation. And you, likewise, shall perish if you go to the king.

SHAHRAZAD: Father, I know what I'm doing. I must go to the King. I know it's a bit of a risk, but the lives of many of our citizens are at stake. I must at least try.

VIZIER: No, Shahrazad. I can't let you do this!

SHAHRAZAD: Father, the donkey didn't die. The donkey thought of a clever plan. He said to the ox...

DONKEY: Do you know what I heard the plowman say today?

OX: What?

DONKEY: He said that if the ox failed to get up and eat tomorrow, he would call the butcher to come slaughter him. If I were you, I think I'd start eating my beans again.

OX: The b-b-butcher?!

DONKEY: Yes, the butcher!

OX: Have I ever told you how much I love beans mixed with mud and chaff?

DONKEY: No, really?

OX: Yes, they're quite delicious.

DONKEY: And how do you feel about plowing?

OX: Well, it's not so bad, really. You kind of get used to it after a while.

Plowman enters from curtain 2. He takes both the ox and the donkey.

PLOWMAN: Feeling better today, Mr. Ox? It's time to start plowing. And you get to work today, too, Mr. Donkey. The master has errands in town today. Come along now.

All three exit via curtain 2. Stalls are immediately removed from the stage through curtain 2.

SHAHRAZAD: And so, dear father, the donkey was able to save himself by using his wits. I believe I can keep myself alive in the same manner.

VIZIER: My daughter, the mind of a king is more complex than that of an ox or a donkey.

SHAHRAZAD: Yes, but in some respects they are a bit similar.

DUNYAZAD: Shahrazad, I believe you can do it. I know how clever you are. You tell such wonderful stories!

SHAHRAZAD: Father, I've made up my mind. I will go to the king myself, if I must. Nothing you can say will make me change my mind.

VIZIER: Shahrazad, I don't want to lose you.

SHAHRAZAD: The fathers in our kingdom don't want to lose their daughters, either. I think I can save them.

And I can save myself, too. Trust me, father.

VIZIER: *(after a pause)* May God have mercy on you, my daughter. I will go and tell the king.

Vizier exits.

SHAHRAZAD: Dunyazad, I need you to do something for me. It's very important. Tonight, after the king and I have retired to the bedchamber, I want you to come and knock on the door. You are to say in your sweet little voice, "Sister, I cannot get to sleep out of worry for what might become of you tomorrow. I fear I will never hear one of your lovely stories ever again. With the king's permission, may I hear one last story?"

DUNYAZAD: Yes, sister, of course I will do that. But will it truly be the last story you will ever tell?

SHAHRAZAD: If God has mercy upon us, it will not be the last story, but rather the first story—the first of many, many stories. Now go and prepare for the wedding.

The girls both exit, stage right.

SCENE 4

At this point, the set needs to be changed from the throne room to the royal bedchamber. In the interim you may choose to have some music, or perhaps a wedding dance could be staged. Present on stage would be the king, the vizier, Shahrazad, Dunyazad, and any number dancers and courtiers. A ceremony is not necessary, as the original text mentions no ceremony. (She was considered a concubine for three years and bore him three sons before he officially married her and made her the queen.) Music and swirling dancers surrounding the King and Shahrazad will suggest the festive atmosphere of wedding celebration. As the music fades, all actors leave the stage except for the King and Shahrazad. Any special lighting effects you have to suggest night (such as blue lights) should come on now. Shahrazad goes over and sits on the bed it begins to comb her hair. The king sits in a chair and stares at Shahrazad. (Alternatively, you can have the king busy himself with some trivial task related to something you have on stage such as a wardrobe or bird cage or writing desk.)

SHAHRIYAR: *(a bit gruffly)* Why do women comb their hair before bed?

SCHEHERAZADE: I don't know... I never really thought about it. It's just something I do.

SHAHRIYAR: It's a silly thing to do. It's just going to get all messed up while you sleep.

SCHEHERAZADE: I suppose it's one of those things one does before bed as sort of a... calming ritual. Don't you have any bedtime rituals?

SHAHRIYAR: No.

SCHEHERAZADE: Some people like to read, or... to listen to a story.

SHAHRIYAR: I hate stories.

SCHEHERAZADE: Stories can relax the body and renew the mind.

SHAHRIYAR: Stories are a waste of time.

There is a knock on the door. It is Dunyazad, of course.

SHAHRIYAR: Who would have the audacity to knock on my door at this late hour?

SHAHRAZAD: I'll see who it is. *(She gets up and goes to the door quickly.)*

SHAHRIYAR: Who is it?

Shahrazad cracks open the door and Dunyazad peaks her head in.

SHAHRAZAD: It's my little sister, Dunyazad.

DUNYAZAD: Sister, I cannot get to sleep out of worry for what might become of you tomorrow. I fear I will never hear one of your lovely stories ever again. With the King's permission, may I hear one last story?

SHAHRAZAD: Our king is most kind and generous. He is like the sun which never ceases to enlighten and warm the earth, blessing it with fruitfulness. He is strong like the sun, yet gentle, like the moon. Like a noble rooster caring for his flock of hens and chicks, so our king devotes himself to attending to the needs of his little ones. Certainly he will grant this very humble request.

SHAHRIYAR: *(said awkwardly with many pauses)* Well... I, ah... I suppose one... *(very short)* story... won't delay bedtime... too much.

DUNYAZAD: I want to hear a story about a genie. You said we needed a genie.

SHAHRAZAD: Ah yes, well... I know a story about a fisherman who met a genie. But I must tell you something before we begin.

The two girls go over to the bed and make themselves comfortable. The King sits in a chair impatiently, determined not to be affected by the story. (He needs to be off to the side of the stage, not in the center. As Shahrazad tells her story, the story actors will fill the center of the stage.)

DUNYAZAD: Is it a secret?

SHAHRAZAD: Yes. But you must promise not to laugh at me.

DUNYAZAD: You know me, Shahrazad, you can trust me. I would never laugh at anything you say—unless I was supposed to laugh, of course.

SHAHRAZAD: I trust you with my life, Dunyazad, that's why going to tell you my secret.

DUNYAZAD: *(in great suspense)* What is it?

SHAHRAZAD: *(gathers Dunyazad close to her)* Well, don't tell anyone I said this, but I heard this story from my uncle, who heard it from his uncle, who heard it from his grandfather, who heard it from HIS grandfather, who heard it from a fisherman's wife, who lived in a small village on the coast of the Aral Sea. And she claimed this story is true!

DUNYAZAD: Was she the wife of the fishermen in the story?

SHAHRAZAD: I don't know. All I know is that my uncle said that the fisherman's wife was as honest as a mirror, and she said the story was true.

DUNYAZAD: Is this a true story, then?

SHAHRAZAD: It's not for me to say. I just know what my uncle told me. He told me that once upon a time there lived a fisherman who had a wife and three children. They were so poor that they had barely enough food to survive each day. Each day the fishermen would go down to the shore of the sea and cast his net into it, hoping to catch at least a few fish with which to feed his family. He always hoped to catch a few extra fish which he could sell in the market for profit, but this rarely happened. One day, he caught something very strange in his net.

SCENE 5

THE STORY OF THE FISHERMAN AND THE GENIE

and SUB-STORY: KING YUNAN AND THE PHYSICIAN DUBAN

The set crew needs to bring out the set pieces for the story through curtain 2. The genie needs to be hidden inside or behind a large sturdy box (or a small flat) that has been decorated to look like a large rock sitting by the seashore, (or perhaps a little hill with trees growing on it). If you use a box, the open side of the box must face backstage.

The fisherman enters from curtain 2 and begins casting his net. If he stands at the front of the stage and casts the net towards the back, but close to the box, the genie will be able to put the bottle into the net without the audience seeing it. The fisherman hauls in the net and finds the bottle.

FISHERMAN: I was hoping for fish, but at least this is better than that dead donkey I caught last week! I wonder how much I can get for this at the market? It looks like an antique. Perhaps even a few hundred years old. I'll need to clean it out before I sell it—I'll bet it's filled with seawater. *(The fisherman proceeds to unscrew and remove the lid. Suddenly, the bottle begins to shake. The fisherman becomes frightened.)*

FISHERMAN: God have mercy! What strange things are lurking inside this bottle?! *(He tosses the bottle away, making it land behind the box where the genie is hiding. At this point, you may add any special effects you wish, such as steam or smoke. In any case, the genie begins to arise from behind the box, very slowly, as if being freed from the bottle.*

SHAHRAZAD: Out of that bottle came a dreadful demon, with 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, he was a hideous monster. When the fishermen saw him, he shook with terror. Then the genie spoke.

GENIE: Oh, Solomon, prophet of God, forgive me, forgive me. Never again will I disobey you!

FISHERMAN: What? What? What are you talking about? Surely you don't mean THE Solomon?.

GENIE: There is only one Solomon—Solomon the Wise, Solomon the King. Solomon... the Magnificent!

FISHERMAN: Well, I'm sorry to have to give you this news, but Solomon has been gone for some time now.

GENIE: Well then—I shall have to kill you!

FISHERMAN: What? I didn't kill Solomon. Nobody killed Solomon. He lived to be an old man and died peacefully in his bed!

GENIE: I still have to kill you.

FISHERMAN: I thought genies granted wishes.

GENIE: All right, I will grant you one wish.

FISHERMAN: Can I have anything I want?

GENIE: You may wish for one thing only. You may choose the manner of your death!

FISHERMAN: That's not a wish! Genies give people things like money and jewels and mansions.

GENIE: Sorry, not today. I really must kill you.

FISHERMAN: What have I done? What is my terrible crime for which I must die?

GENIE: You must know my story first. I am one of the renegade genies who rebelled against Solomon, son of David. Solomon defeated me and told me I must submit to him. When I refused to obey him, he put me into this bottle and sealed it tightly and threw it into the sea. I stayed there 200 years, saying to myself, "Whoever sets me free, I will make him rich." But no one rescued me during those 200 years. Then another 200 years went by. I vowed to myself, "Whoever sets me free, I will give him all the treasures of the earth." But no one rescued me. Then another 200 years went by. I said to myself, "Whoever delivers me, I will make him king of the land, and grant him 3 wishes every day of his life." But no one rescued me. After 1000 years, I had no patience left. I swore to myself that when I finally got free of this accursed bottle I would kill the first person I saw. Then, after another thousand years, you came along.

FISHERMAN: That hardly seems fair. All I did was go fishing. I have done nothing wrong. How could I have known that there was an angry genie inside that bottle? You should be grateful to me for setting you free!

GENIE: I never break promises to myself. I promised to kill the first person I set eyes on, so that's what I'm going to do. Now how would you like to die?

FISHERMAN: Have mercy, genie. I have a wife and three children at home. They depend on me to supply their food each day. What shall become of them?

GENIE: That's not my problem.

FISHERMAN: I did you a good turn, and you are about to repay me with evil. Don't forget that God is watching. He will repay you for this evil deed.

GENIE: Theology does not interest me.

FISHERMAN: You absolutely MUST kill me then?

GENIE: Yes. Now please hurry up and choose your manner of execution, or I shall choose it for you.

SHAHRAZAD: The fishermen saw that his life was about to end unless he could find a way to trick the genie.

FISHERMAN: Were you really inside that bottle?

GENIE: I was.

FISHERMAN: You are very large and that bottle is very small. I don't think even a rabbit could fit inside that bottle let alone a huge genie like yourself.

GENIE: I say I WAS inside that bottle! I truly was!

FISHERMAN: I don't believe you. And I don't believe your story about Solomon, either. I think you swam across the sea and arrived here just as I cast my net.

GENIE: I tell you I WAS inside that bottle! I can even prove it to you!

FISHERMAN: Well then, prove it!

At this point the genie needs to place the bottle behind the box, then place himself behind or above the box so he can appear to shrink back down and disappear into the bottle. The genie will also need some kind of a container in which to speak into, making it sound like he is trapped inside the bottle. The genie will remain behind or inside the box for this next scene. The fisherman should pick up the bottle once the genie has disappeared and place it on top of the box, right over the genie so that the genie's voice will be coming from as close to the bottle as possible.

GENIE: You see? I DO fit into the bottle!

FISHERMAN: Yes, I believe you now. And I am also going to make sure that you never get out ever again.

Goodbye, foul demon! *(The fisherman now puts the lid on the bottle.)*

GENIE: No! No!

FISHERMAN: Yes! Yes!

GENIE: Fisherman, I was just joking with you! I would never harm you!

FISHERMAN: You are lying, you dirty monster! You WERE going to kill me.

GENIE: Honest, I wasn't! If you let me out now, I will give you three wishes every day for the rest of your life!

FISHERMAN: I don't trust you. I asked you to spare me, but you would not. Now you are asking me to spare you, so I will not.

GENIE: What are you going to do with me?

FISHERMAN: I'm going to throw you back into the sea, and this time you can stay there until Doomsday!

GENIE: Please, no! I will do anything you tell me! Please don't throw me back into the sea!

FISHERMAN: Justice must be served, genie. You must be given what you deserve.

GENIE: It's not fair!

FISHERMAN: Yes, it is. Our situation is just like that of King Yunan and his physician. You know what happened in that story.

GENIE: I've never heard that story.

FISHERMAN: You don't know the story of King Yunan and his physician?

GENIE: Don't forget—I've been out of circulation for 2000 years.

FISHERMAN: Before I throw you back into the sea, I will tell you the story of King Yunan.

GENIE: Thank you, fisherman. Don't hesitate to make it a very long story.

FISHERMAN: Once upon a time there was a King named Yunan. His kingdom was in Persia, in the province of Zuman.

SCENE 6

THE STORY OF KING YUNAN AND HIS PHYSICIAN, DUBAN

At this point, the set will need to be rearranged slightly, in order to accommodate this next story. The fisherman and the large box will need to move to stage left. The set crew will need to bring out a throne for King Yunan through curtain 2.

Enter King Yunan and two or more of Yunan's sages from curtain 2. King Yunan must act like he is feeling sick. If your make-up department can manage it, the king should have spots on his face and hands—spots that can be removed almost instantly. (The original text says he had leprosy.)

FISHERMAN: King Yunan was afflicted with a rare disease. He suffered greatly, and for years all the doctors in his kingdom had tried to cure him. But no one could help him. Then one day, a traveler came into the city. *(Enter Duban.)* He had come all the way from Byzantium to pay a visit to the king.

DUBAN: *(kneels or bows)* Your majesty, though I live in a faraway land, the news of your illness was brought to me about a month ago. You see, many difficult cases are brought to me and I have been able to cure almost every one of them. So I gathered together my necessary items and left immediately. I believe I can cure your illness.

KING YUNAN: This seems too wonderful. After all these years, can someone yet cure me? Many physicians have tried and failed. What makes you think you can do it?

DUBAN: For 30 years I have been studying the healing arts of the Greeks, the Persians, the Turks, the Arabs, the Byzantines, the Hebrews, and the Syrians. I have acquired all of their knowledge concerning medicine and healing herbs. I have a vast library and an extensive herb garden.

KING YUNAN: So which will it be—a smelly, sticky ointment or a nasty-tasting potion?

DUBAN: Neither. I can cure you without ointments or potions.

KING YUNAN: Impossible.

DUBAN: Maybe for your physicians, but not for me. *(The king's sages look disgruntled when he says this.)*

KING YUNAN: When can you begin?

DUBAN: I will spend tomorrow working on the cure, and bring it to you just before the sun sets.

KING YUNAN: *(to his courtiers and sages)* Well, get to it! Find this man a place to work!
The sages and courtiers all say, "Yes, your majesty." and lead Duban off stage through curtain 2.

FISHERMAN: So the physician Duban set up his equipment and began distilling and extracting the rare herbs he had brought with him. As he promised, his cure was ready before the sun touched the horizon.
King Yunan re-enters from curtain 2, along with sages and courtiers. After the King is seated on his throne, Duban enters. Duban is carrying a fancy chalice of some kind. If possible, have steam coming out of the chalice (dry ice) Obviously, if you are using dry ice, you don't want the king to inhale it overly much. The king can act like he is inhaling it without actually inhaling..

DUBAN: Your Majesty, I humbly present to you the cure for your illness.

KING YUNAN: What do I do with it?

DUBAN: Put it under your nose and inhale the steam. You will find that it has a most pleasant aroma.
Duban gives the chalice to the King.

KING YUNAN: *(“inhaling” some of the steam)* It is most pleasant. This is by far the best medicine I've ever taken.

DUBAN: Take the chalice to your bedchamber, your Majesty. Put it next to your head and continue inhaling the steam until it runs out. In the morning, you will feel much better.

KING YUNAN: Thank you, physician Duban. If this works, I will reward you handsomely. I think I will retire to my chamber right now. You are all dismissed.
King Yunan, Duban, and all courtiers exit. If the King has spots on his face, as soon as he gets backstage they need to be removed as quickly as possible.

FISHERMAN: What do you think, genie? Did the cure work?

GENIE: Well, it would be a pretty stupid story if it didn't.

FISHERMAN: And what will the physician deserve if the cure works? What would you grant him?

GENIE: Oh, the usual. You know—chests of gold, expensive clothes, a splendid mansion...

FISHERMAN: And if the cure doesn't work?

GENIE: Execution.

FISHERMAN: But the king would be no worse off. The physician won't have harmed the King. The King will just be the same as he always was.

GENIE: I still say instant death.

FISHERMAN: Listen and learn, genie. Take to heart what happens to both the physician and the King. The next morning physician Duban and all the King's sages assembled in the throne room.
Enter the sages first from curtain 2, followed by Duban, then the king last. The king coming in last allows him to stay backstage a few more seconds and have that small amount of extra time, if he needs it, for “de-spotting” his face.

DUBAN: You are looking well this morning, your majesty.

KING YUNAN: I haven't felt this good for years! Duban, you are a genius! Courtiers, present my gifts.
Courtiers present Duban with a royal robe and a chest of gold, or bag of gold, or whatever valuables you want to use.

KING YUNAN: Physician Duban, these are just small tokens of my gratitude. I will also grant you a salary of a thousand dinars a day if you will agree to remain at my palace and be my personal physician.

DUBAN: Your majesty is most generous. You do not need to do these things. I was simply fulfilling my duty as a physician.

KING YUNAN: Oh, but I insist. Also, I would like you to instruct my sages in your ways of wisdom. There is much they can learn from you. Your wisdom is greater than any found in my kingdom.

DUBAN: Your majesty is most gracious.

KING YUNAN: Come, Duban, you must dine with me at my morning meal. I shall have my cooks prepare a feast in your honor.
The king takes Duban by the arm and escorts him off stage through curtain 2, followed by his courtiers. The sages remain.

SAGE 1: Did you hear that? How dare the king insult us in front of this foreigner! I hope the cook poisons the feast!

SAGE 2: Fortunately, this situation is easily dealt with. The king is a fool. It should be child's play to turn his affection away from this know-it-all Byzantine. I think we can assume that this foreigner is a traitor. What are your thoughts on the matter?

SAGE 1: I say he's a spy. He was probably sent here to assassinate our King.

SAGE 2: Undoubtedly. Then we are in agreement?

SAGE 1: Absolutely.

The two sages exit through curtain 2, (or curtains 1 and 3 for some variety, if you wish).

FISHERMAN: The king's wise men began to spread rumors about physician Duban saying that he had come to assassinate the king. At first, the king did not believe these rumors. But as the days went by, and the rumors grew and flourished, the king began to look suspiciously upon Duban. Then, one day, when the king's wise men believed the rumors had accomplished their purpose, they confronted the king openly.

Enter king and wise men from curtain 2. They are talking as they come in.

SAGE 1: Your majesty, you simply cannot take the risk of having this physician in your palace. He is a very dangerous man. You must send him out of your palace immediately.

KING YUNAN: But there is no reason to suspect him of being anything but an honest man. He cured me of my illness.

SAGE 2: A man who can cure can also kill. He has knowledge not only of healing herbs, but of deadly ones, as well.

KING YUNAN: But he seems so nice.

SAGE 1: How is it that everyone in your kingdom knows more about his man than you do?! Ask any of your citizens and they will tell you that your physician is biding his time until the hour he has chosen for your death.

The king sits down on his throne.

KING YUNAN: No! I won't believe it!

SAGE 2: You must, or you will die!

KING YUNAN: Give me evidence!

SAGE 1: It has been reported to me that the armies of Byzantium are beginning to mobilize for no apparent reason.

KING YUNAN: Duban said he came from Byzantium.

SAGE 2: Precisely.

KING YUNAN: Then I must mobilize my forces, also.

SAGE 1: There is no need. The Byzantine forces will be waiting for the opportune moment to attack.

KING YUNAN: What moment is that?

SAGE 2: The hour of your death.

KING YUNAN: You mean my assassination... at the hand of my physician?

SAGE 1: But that hour need never come if you follow our advice. Just think—a war can be avoided. The lives of many soldiers and citizens can be saved if you act now, before it's too late.

KING YUNAN: I must banish Duban.

SAGE 2: Banishment is not enough. This man is steeped in black magic. He could disguise himself beyond all recognition, perhaps even as an animal, and sneak back into your palace when you least suspect.

KING YUNAN: Then I only have one option.

SAGE 1: We grieve along with you, your majesty.

KING YUNAN: Call in physician Duban!

One or more courtiers standing by curtain 2 exit quickly and then come back in immediately with Duban.

DUBAN: *(all smiles)* Your majesty—you are looking so very well today. You look robust and full of life. You hardly need a physician any longer.

KING YUNAN: You're right. I don't. Executioner!

Executioner enters from curtain 3 along with two guards. Duban looks confused. The sages look smug.

KING YUNAN: Executioner, strike off the head of my physician.

DUBAN: Surely the king jests.

The king is silent.

DUBAN: *(after a pause, when her realizes the king is in earnest)* But.. but.. what is my crime?

KING YUNAN: Treason. You have come to assassinate me.

DUBAN: Truly, I came to cure you! I have done nothing to harm you!

KING YUNAN: I have been told that you are a spy. I plan to have you for lunch before you have me for din-

ner! Executioner, rid me of this man!

DUBAN: *(suddenly realizes that he has been framed by the sages)* No, no, please your majesty. Please spare me. I am innocent. The tales you have been told are false!. I am not a spy!

KING YUNAN: Strike off his head!

The two guards grab Duban and hold him fast. The executioner starts tying his hands behind his back.

DUBAN: No, your majesty, please! Have mercy! I am innocent! You cannot put an innocent man to death. If you do, God will destroy you. If you have mercy on me, God will have mercy on you.

KING YUNAN: It's too late. I've already made up my mind! Off with your head!

DUBAN: *(while the execution ties a blindfold around his eyes)* No, please, your majesty! Listen to reason! Is this the reward I receive for curing your illness? Surely God will punish injustice. If you put me to death, God will destroy you. If you spare me, He will spare you.

A COURTIER: Your majesty, please consider pardoning this man. He seems truly concerned for your welfare.

DUBAN: If you do this to me, my fate will be like that of the crocodile in the Story of the Crocodile.

KING YUNAN: The crocodile? What is the story of the crocodile?

DUBAN: *(pause)* I'm hardly in a position where I can tell a story right now.

SAGE 1: It's a trick, sire. He's just stalling for time. Don't fall for it!

DUBAN: Okay, then. Never mind about the crocodile story. I have something much more important to tell you. I must not die before I tell you a secret.

KING YUNAN: Say on.

DUBAN: I have many priceless books in my library. But there is one book that is more important than all the rest. It has the answers to all of life's questions and reveals the deepest secrets of the universe. I would like to bequeath this book to your majesty.

KING YUNAN: What is the title of this amazing book? And how did you acquire it?

DUBAN: On the cover of the book is written "The Secret of Secrets." I cannot tell you where I got this book, but I can tell you one of its most amazing secrets.

KING YUNAN: Yes?

DUBAN: It contains a spell for making a decapitated head speak.

KING YUNAN: A talking head?

SAGE 2: Don't believe it, your majesty.

KING YUNAN: *(hushing his sages with a wave of his hand, then replying to Duban)* Explain this to me.

DUBAN: After you behead me, place my head on a tray. Then open the book to page six and read the words on line three. Then speak to my head and it will speak back to you.

KING YUNAN: This I've got to see!

DUBAN: You don't have to see it. You can choose the path of justice and mercy and spare me.

KING YUNAN: No, I must see your head speak to me.

DUBAN: Your majesty, I implore you one last time, for your own sake. Do not choose the path of destruction. Spare me and God will spare you. Destroy me, and God will destroy you. Save yourself!

KING YUNAN: Executioner, strike off his head! And send someone to his house to retrieve this marvelous book from his library.

Guards and executioner exit with Duban. Then, suddenly, all actors exit, along with all their associated sets and props.

SCENE 7

The room is returned to normal as quickly as possible. King Shahriyar gets up from his chair and moves to center stage, stunned that the story just stopped so abruptly. He looks around in disbelief. After a period of silence, finally speaks.

SHAHRIYAR: And? *(pause)*

SHAHRAZAD: And then the storyteller became so sleepy that she could not continue the story until the following night. She gently woke her little sister and tenderly guided her through the dark hallways of the palace until they reached her bedchamber. The storyteller promised the younger sister that if they king would spare her life until the next evening, she would finish the story of King Yunan and his physician Duban.

Shahrazad gently wakes Dunyazad and begins escorting the sleepy girl toward the bedchamber door on stage right. The King is in shock.

SHAHRIYAR: But... but what happens to Duban? Is he beheaded? Does the head speak? Does the magic spell work? You must tell me!!

SHAHRAZAD: I will tell you... tomorrow night. *(continues toward the door)*

SHAHRIYAR: You can't leave the story unfinished!

SHAHRAZAD: With your Majesty's kind permission, I shall continue the story, and we shall learn what became of King Yunan and his physician. But unlike Duban, I have no magic spells for making my head speak. My head must stay connected to my body in order to finish the story.

SHAHRIYAR: All right, all right. I grant you your head until tomorrow night.

SHAHRAZAD: *(bows her head to the King)* His majesty is most gracious.

Shahrazad and Dunyazad exit. Shahriyar sits down on the bed. He slowly lies back and closes his eyes. The stage is quiet for just long enough to suggest that Shahriyar has dozed off for a few hours. Then the night time lights are turned off, to suggest that the night is over. Then the Vizier enters from stage left.

VIZIER: Your excellency, it is time for your morning tea. *(He is carrying a tray that has a teapot and several little saucers on it. The pot and the saucers need to be lightly wired to the tray so that they can jiggle but not fall off.)*

SHAHRIYAR: *(only half awake)* Morning already?

VIZIER: I trust you had a refreshing sleep, your Majesty. Sleep is God's good gift—it can cleanse the mind and dissipate all the troublesome thoughts of the day before.

SHAHRIYAR: The sun can't possibly be up already.

VIZIER: The rays of sun are bathing your kingdom in warmth and light, and stirring it to life. Fresh green leaves are unfolding, buds are opening, and tender sprouts are rising toward the sun. Roosters are crowing and eggs are hatching. The beasts of burden are lowing and braying in gratitude that God has given them another day to serve mankind.

SHAHRIYAR: Hmpf.

VIZIER: Your Majesty's realm is brimming with life and health.

SHAHRIYAR: Hmpf.

VIZIER: If His Excellency would be pleased to take his morning tea, his mind will become clear and his body will feel full life.

SHAHRIYAR: Hmpf.

VIZIER: We must discuss your agenda for the day, sire. Ambassadors from Kashmir willing be arriving soon.

SHAHRIYAR: Vizier ...

VIZIER: Yes, your Majesty?

SHAHRIYAR: ...how long could a decapitated head survive?

VIZIER: *(The tray he is holding begins to shake and rattle and his voice quivers. He swallows hard, or maybe chokes, before speaking.)* D...d...do have a... certain... head... in m-m-mind?

SHAHRIYAR: Could a head possibly survive for just long enough to be able to speak a few words?

VIZIER: *(still trembling)* I... I've never heard of such a thing, your Majesty.

SHAHRIYAR: Could such a story be true?

VIZIER: What story?

SHAHRIYAR: The story of King Yunan and his physician Duban.

VIZIER: *(obviously relieved, possibly mops his brow)* Strange things can happen in faraway lands. My grandfather's uncle came back from China with the most amazing stories. And he swore they were all true.

SHAHRIYAR: Was there ever a King named Yunan in the Persian province of Zuman?

VIZIER: I shall have the royal historian research that for you today, your Majesty. Meanwhile, we need to discuss the ambassadors from Kashmir. They shall be here very soon.

SHAHRIYAR: Yes, yes, of course. See to the ambassadors immediately.

VIZIER: Yes, your Majesty.

Vizier sets down tray and exits.

SHAHRIYAR: *(gets up and begins pacing)* Is it possible? If the bleeding were stopped immediately, so that there was no loss of consciousness, could the head speak a few words before it succumbed? No. No. It's a trick. She's tricking me. The story doesn't end like that at all. The King must relent and spare the physician. It's obvious. Shahrazad is a wily woman, but I won't be caught in her trap! A talking head—what rubbish!

The vizier enters again.

VIZIER: Your Majesty, the ambassadors from Kashmir have arrived. They would have an audience with you, if

it pleases your highness.

SHARIAR: Yes. Bring them in. I'll see them right away.

Shahriyar moves a chair to center stage and sits in it. Two ambassadors enter.

AMBASSADOR 1: We bring you greetings from Kashmir.

AMBASSADOR 2: We wish your highness a long life and good health.

AMBASSADOR 1: This silk and these spices are gifts of friendship from our people.

AMBASSADOR 2: It is our hope that you will think of our king as a younger brother.

SHAHRIYAR: I accept your gifts and your offer of friendship. But I have a question for you. *(pause)* In the folklore or the historical chronicles of Kashmir, is there any record of anyone surviving decapitation? I don't mean permanently—just the head—for a few seconds.

The ambassadors slowly turn their heads and look at each other. There's an awkward silence.

VIZIER: *(trying to cover for the king's bizarre question)* And is it true that your country used to be a lake between the mountains? And how do your goats manage those steep mountainsides? There are so many odd and entertaining questions we may discuss over the course of your visit. But please allow me to show you to the guest house where you may make yourselves comfortable. Come.

The vizier escorts the ambassadors out as quickly as he can, before the king can ask any more questions. A few seconds after the vizier has disappeared, he reappears again at the door (without the ambassadors).

VIZIER: Your majesty is, perhaps, in need of rest. I will see to the affairs of state until this afternoon.

The vizier exits again. Shahriyar goes over and sits down on the bed. He puts his head in his hands, then decides to lie back. He falls asleep. The blue lights will then come on. Shahriyar still sleeps. A servant comes in and places a dinner tray on a table, replaces the chair to its place against the wall, and quietly exits. Then Shahrazad and Dunyazad enter. Dunyazad hides under the bed or behind the bed. Shahrazad sits down on the bed. As she does, Shahriyar awakens.

SHAHRIYAR: Is it morning?

SHAHRAZAD: No, even better, it's the beginning of another night...

SHAHRIYAR: You promised to finish your story.

SHAHRAZAD: And so I shall. *(Then she gets up and goes over and gets the dinner tray and brings it to Shahriyar.)* But I believe the king has not eaten his supper. *(She brings the tray over and sets it down.)* A king must nourish his body, not just his mind. *(She picks up a piece of fruit and holds it up in front of Shahriyar and they both stare at it, obviously thinking of how much it reminds them of a head. Then Shahrazad picks up a knife and holds it by the fruit. Shahriyar looks at the knife. Shahrazad looks Shahriyar in the eye and speaks softly.)* Shall we begin?

Shahriyar nods slowly. He is beginning to fall under her spell again.

SHAHRAZAD: I heard it said, your majesty, that the fisherman resumed telling his tale to the genie.

The fisherman enters. The set crew rolls out his set piece quickly as possible, with the genie hiding in the box. The fisherman is holding the bottle, speaking to it as if the genie were inside. The set is put to the side, to allow for the finishing of the tale of King Yunan. (Option: The fisherman's opening lines can be said while his set is being rolled into place.)

FISHERMAN: And so, genie, King Yunan sent servants to the home of physician Dubin to retrieve for him the book of secrets. They found the book and brought it to the King. The King followed the physician's instructions and did not open the book until after the execution had taken place.

SCENE 8

Enter two courtiers carrying throne (and putting it in place quickly), immediately followed by the King, his sages, and other courtiers. (NOTE: If you want some good shrieks when Duban opens his eyes, make sure there are some girls among the courtiers.) The king sits down on this throne. He is holding the magic book, which is tied shut with ribbons.

FISHERMAN: The executioner did as he was told and placed the head of Duban on a platter and sent the platter to the King.

Enter two servants pushing a cart on top of which is Duban's head. Of course, you will need a specialized set piece—sort of a rolling table with a hole for the head to stick out.

Dunyazad peeks out from under or behind the bed.

KING YUNAN: He said page 6, line 3. *(He undoes the ribbons and begins to open the book. The pages are*

stuck together.) These pages seem to be stuck together.

SAGE 1: Perhaps if your majesty moistens his fingers, he may be able to separate the pages.

KING YUNAN: Good idea. *(He touches his index finger and thumb to his tongue, then continues to try to separate pages.)* This first page is blank! *(Moistens his fingers again.)* And the second page as well. *(Moistens his fingers and turns pages again.)* There is nothing here! This book is worthless. *(He goes over to Duban's head and gets down close to it.)* You said you'd be able to talk to me. Ha! Some wizard you turned out to be. If you can talk, then tell me what's in this book.

DUBAN: *(eyes suddenly fly open and he says loudly)* POISON!

The king leaps backward. Everyone in the room reacts. Screams or faints are at director's discretion. Perhaps Dunyazad screams as well (then dives under a pillow?).

DUBAN: The pages are dusted with poisonous powder—and you have just licked your fingers! The poison should begin taking effect any second now.

King Yunan looks at his fingers, then puts his hand to his chest. Then he suddenly collapses.

DUBAN: A king whose reign is just and true

Need not fear receiving his due.

But those who listen to jealous sages,

Should fear the sting of poisoned pages!

When Justice comes to collect her fee,

Lay not the blame on "destiny"! *(NOTE: This poem is an approximation of the poem in the original texts.)*

After Duban says his last line, his eyes close and that's it.

As the fisherman resumes talking, all the actors in the Duban story exit as quickly and quietly as possible.

FISHERMAN: And so, genie, you see what became of the king. He returned evil for good and look what became of him. And so it is with you, genie. If you had decided to spare me, then I would not have locked you up in the bottle again. But now I am going to give you what you deserve and throw you into the sea!

GENIE: Please, please don't throw me back into the sea. I am like the physician Duban, begging for my life.

Don't do what Imana did to Atika.

FISHERMAN: What did Imana do to Atika?

GENIE: Um...I'm hardly in a position where I can tell a story right now.

FISHERMAN: Will you tell me if I release you?

GENIE: I will tell you the whole story.

DUNYAZAD: No! You can't trust a genie unless he's said the words, "I promise." Then he's not allowed to break his promise.

FISHERMAN: *(after a pause)* No, I just can't trust you. I am going to throw you back into the sea and then I am going to build a hut right here by the sea and live in it so that if any other fisherman ever pulls you out of the sea I can be here to warn him about you. And then when I die, I will tell my son to do the same, and so it will go down the generations, until the end of time.

GENIE: Please, please, I implore you, don't throw me back! I... I... I... promise not to harm you. There! Now please let me out.

FISHERMAN: You promise to serve me and grant me at least three wishes?

GENIE: Yes, I promise. It is impossible for a genie to break a promise once he has made it.

FISHERMAN: All right, then. I will take the stopper out of the bottle. But remember your promise!

The fisherman then takes the lid off the bottle and sets it out of sight of the audience, right below the place where the genie will appear (the same way you staged it the last time).

GENIE: *(stretches and takes a deep breath and lets it out, perhaps stretches a bit)* Now then, you're a fisherman—let's go fishing, shall we? I know of a magical lake just on the other side of the mountains. *(Looks down at fisherman's feet.)* Wait a minute... Hmm. Maybe we should do something about those shoes of yours before we walk so far. You wouldn't care to wish for a new pair of shoes, would you?

FISHERMAN: *(proudly)* This pair still serves me fairly well.

GENIE: Nevermind the story about Imana and Atika, you need to hear "The Story of The Rotten Shoes."

I'll tell it to you as we walk to the lake. Come on!

The fisherman and the genie exit. (Thus concludes The Story of the Fishermen and the him Genie.)

DUNYAZAD: So the Genie kept his promise and didn't kill the fishermen?

SHAHRAZAD: That's right. It's impossible for a Genie to break a promises once he's made it.

SHAHRIYAR: Just like it's impossible for a King to break his promises once he has made them.

SHAHRAZAD: But kings are so much more reasonable and merciful than genies. Don't you think so, Dunyazad?

DUNYAZAD: Yes, I'd much rather leave my fate in hands of the King than the Genie. Especially a King as wise and auspicious as our own wonderful king. *(She perhaps looks at him and he looks away?)* But what about the story that the genie was going to tell to the fisherman—the story about the rotten shoes?

SHAHRIYAR: The Genie is gone now. He's on the other side of the mountain by now.

DUNYAZAD: Shahrazad, do you know the story?

SHAHRAZAD: Not as well as the Genie but perhaps well enough to get by.

SHAHRIYAR: I've kept my promise. Your sister has had her story. We're done with stories now. It's time for bed!

SHAHRAZAD: *(slightly panicked)* But I've heard rumors that not ten streets away from your palace garden there lives a man almost as ludicrous as Abu Kasim. He makes people laugh just by walking down the street.

SHAHRIYAR: Who is Abu Kasim?

SHAHRAZAD: The owner of the most famous pair of shoes that ever walked the streets of Baghdad.

SHAHRIYAR: Never heard of him.

SHAHRAZAD: It's not a long story—it's very short and very funny. Humorous bedtime stories set the stage for pleasant dreams and refreshing sleep. A king, of all people, needs pleasant dreams and refreshing sleep.

SHAHRIYAR: Well... all right... just keep it short.

SHAHRAZAD: Yes, and with all gratitude your majesty.

SCENE 9

THE STORY OF THE ROTTEN SHOES

SHAHRAZAD: *(turning to Dunyazad)* Abu Kasim was a successful merchant and had grown very rich, but he was also a miserly old money-grubber and hated to spend money on things he saw as frivolous—things like... new shoes. His one and only pair of shoes had been mended by cobblers more times than any of them could count. After a decade of mending and patching, the shoes had grown to preposterous proportions. They had scraps of leather and cobbler's nails sticking out all over them. In fact, they were so large and so shabby, they were legendary throughout Baghdad.

Enter Abu Kasim (wearing huge, shabby shoes) and his friend, Ahmed from curtain 2.

AHMED: Really, Kasim, you should think about getting a new pair of shoes. You are a successful merchant. Surely you can afford a new pair.

ABU KASIM: A pair of shoes is only good for one thing. They have to get you from one point to another. *(He walks about ten feet and back again.)* It seems to me that this pair is still able to do that. Thus, I don't need a new pair.

AHMED: But Kasim, your shoes—pardon me for telling you so—they are the punch line of half the jokes told in Baghdad.

ABU KASIM: It's no one's business what I wear on my feet. *(Pulls the shoes off his feet and examines them.)* And these shoes still have some wear left in them. When they wear out completely, I'll get a new pair. *(He then turns around just enough so that when the woman and child come through, they will not be able to see the shoes and will not know that he is Abu Kasim.)*

Enter from curtain 1 a woman and a little child. The child is trying to lag behind and the mother is pulling him/her by the hand making him/her hurry up. They will simply walk out and around the two men, (apparently not even noticing them), and will then disappear again through curtain 3.

MOTHER: Come, come! We'll be late! Stop dragging your feet. What's wrong with you? You act like you are wearing the shoes of Abu Kasim!

Exit mother and child through curtain 3. As they exit, enter two women from curtain 1. They also will walk a semi-circle and then disappear through curtain 3.

WOMAN: So I said to my sister, "That's the ugliest roast beef I've ever seen on a serving platter. Shame on that butcher for selling you a piece of meat so chopped and mangled. If I didn't know better, I'd think you were serving up one of Abu Kasim's shoes!

The women both laugh and disappear through curtain 3. Dunyazad might also laugh at this point.

Abu Kasim slowly turns around. His friend doesn't know what to say. Abu Kasim puts on his shoes.

ABU KASIM: Well, my friend. I shall be off now. I have business matters to attend to.

Abu Kasim exits through curtain 2. His friend shrugs and then also exits.

While Shahrazad says her next lines, a bath attendant inconspicuously appears from behind curtain 3. He has a towel draped over his arm so he can be identified as a bath attendant. He places two pairs of shoes along the wall, then stands next to the door.

SHAHRAZAD: Now Abu Kasim had arranged an important business meeting with some of his clients for the following afternoon, so that morning he did something he rarely did. He went to the Turkish bath to get a good scrub. *Enter Abu Kasim, through curtain 2. He walks over to the attendant.*

BATH ATTENDANT: Good morning, sir. Please leave your shoes outside the bath house.

ABU KASIM: Yes, of course. *(He takes off his shoes and leaves them next to the other pairs.)*

BATH ATTENDANT: Here you are, sir. Enjoy your bath. *(He hands Abu Kasim the towel. Of course, in real Turkish baths the attendant would not be handing out towels, but for a modern audience, a towel conveys the idea of bathing.) Abu Kasim nods to the attendant, takes the towel, and disappears through the curtain. The attendant looks down at Abu Kasim's shoes.*

BATH ATTENDANT: That old miser, Abu Kasim! He thinks his shoes will fool us into thinking he doesn't have any money. Maybe he needs a little help buying new shoes. If these old ones disappear, he'll have no choice but to buy new ones.

Enter two or more women (or men) from curtain 1, with large baskets (or sacks or barrels or anything large enough to easily contain the shoes). They stop for a minute to rest, with their backs turned to the bath attendant. You may choose to add a line or two of "small talk" about what they are carrying if you find some conversation necessary. The bath attendant goes over and sticks the shoes into a basket (or barrel or sack) while they are not looking. Then he goes back over to his place by the door and the small group leaves the stage through curtain 2, unaware the one of them is carrying off the famous shoes.

SHAHRAZAD: As fate would have it, another person came to the bath house that morning—the local magistrate. *Enter magistrate from curtain 1. He is followed by two servants.*

BATH ATTENDANT: Your honor, please allow me to take your shoes. *(He stoops down and removes the magistrate's shoes and places them where Abu Kasim's shoes had just been sitting.)* Please, allow me to recommend to you our best barber. I will introduce you to him.

MAGISTRATE: Yes, thank you.

The bath attendant leads the magistrate inside curtain 3 and the servants follow. The set crew should bring out a bench at this point, and set it stage right, opposite the entrance to the bath house.

SHAHRAZAD: Abu Kasim had now finished his bath and was ready to collect his shoes and leave.

Enter Abu Kasim. He goes over and looks for his shoes. He picks up the magistrate's beautiful shoes.

ABU KASIM: My shoes—they have been transformed! *(He picks up the shoes and holds them up, admiring them.)* Maybe an angel was sent from heaven... *(then shakes his head)* Naw... it must have been my friend, Ahmed. He was too shy to give them to me in person, so he just left them here for me outside the bath. I must remember to thank him next time I see him. *(He puts on the shoes.)* Yes, they were meant for me-- they fit perfectly! Ah... I have at least an hour before my meeting. I think I'll just sit and enjoy the sunshine for a few minutes.

Abu Kasim goes over to the bench and sits down (or lies down) on it and closes his eyes.

SHAHRAZAD: A little while later, the magistrate came out of the bath and went to collect his shoes.

Enter magistrate and his servants. He goes over to collect his shoes but they are gone.

MAGISTRATE: My shoes are gone! Someone has stolen them!

SERVANT 1: *(After noticing Abu Kasim)* Master, look over there! That man is wearing your shoes!

All three rush over to where Abu Kasim is.

MAGISTRATE: Thief! Give back my shoes!

The magistrate takes the shoes of Abu Kasim's feet and puts them on his own feet.

SERVANT 2: How dare you rob a magistrate!

ABU KASIM: What? What is going on?

MAGISTRATE: Bring him to my office at once!

The servants pull Abu Kasim along behind the magistrate.

ABU KASIM: *(as he is being dragged off)* What is this about? What is my crime? Tell me what is going on! *All of them exit through curtain 2. As soon as they exit, the stage crew should retrieve bring out a small table and put it in front of the bench. (Or, the bench can be retrieved and a chair put in its place.) This will be the magistrate's office. Also, set the bag or basket containing the shoes next to the table.*

SHAHRAZAD: So Abu Kasim ended up spending the afternoon at the magistrate's office instead of at his busi-

ness meeting.

Enter the magistrate. He sits at the table.

After a pause, the servants enter, holding Abu Kasim. The servants release Abu Kasim, and make him kneel in front of the table, then they go and stand on either side of the table.

MAGISTRATE: Abu Kasim, you are hereby charged with the crime of stealing a pair of shoes. You shall pay a fine of 500 dinars.

ABU KASIM: 500 dinars?! That's double the usual fine!

MAGISTRATE: The stolen shoes are of very fine workmanship and were imported from Persia! And I don't think the fine will bankrupt you...will it? (*Magistrate glares at Kasim.*)

ABU KASIM: (*humbly*) No, sir.

MAGISTRATE: Coincidentally, one of our citizens found something very unusual in her basket this morning. (*The servant nearest the basket pulls the shoes out of it.*) Do these happen to belong to you?

ABU KASIM: Yes, your honor. Those are my shoes.

MAGISTRATE: Take them and be gone!

Abu Kasim puts on his shoes, bows to the magistrate, and slowly exits through curtain 2.

After he leaves, the magistrate and the servants burst out laughing. While still laughing, they get up and exit through center curtain 2. Immediately upon their exit, stage crew needs to get river panel in place behind curtain 2 and be ready to open the curtain to reveal the panel.

SHAHRAZAD: As Abu Kasim walked home from the magistrate's office he did some deep thinking. Now it so happened that on his way home his path took him along the banks of the Tigris River.

Curtain 2 opens (two set crew members, out of view of audience, draw back the curtains) and there is a blue panel that looks like water (perhaps wavy along the top?).

Enter Abu Kasim from curtain 1. He meanders around for a short time, then speaks.

ABU KASIM: (*looks down at his shoes*) Maybe Ahmed was right. Maybe it is time to get rid of these shoes.

They certainly brought me bad luck today. (*He takes off the shoes.*) I think I'll just pitch them into the river. No matter whether they sink or float away, I'll be rid of them.

Abu Kasim tosses his shoes over and behind the water,

ABU KASIM: There! Good riddance.

Abu Kasim exits through curtain 3. Curtain 2 then closes.

SHAHRAZAD: But Fate once again intervened. The next day, Abu Kasim was called to the magistrate's office. *From curtain 2, set crew brings out table and chair once again, for the magistrate. The magistrate and his servants immediately follow and take their places.*

MAGISTRATE: Abu Kasim!

Abu KASIM enters from curtain 2.

ABU KASIM: Yes, your honor?

MAGISTRATE: (*points at his feet*) Where are your shoes?

ABU KASIM: Gone sir. I just haven't had time to buy a new pair yet.

MAGISTRATE: An official complaint has been lodged against you. It seems that you have caused a great deal of damage.

ABU KASIM: Me? I have done nothing.

MAGISTRATE: Call in the fisherman.

Enter fisherman from behind the curtain 2. He is holding a fishing net containing Abu Kasim's shoes.

FISHERMAN: I hold the owner of these shoes responsible for the damage to my nets! The cobbler's nails in these shoes snagged my nets and tore great holes in them. I lost my whole catch of fish.

MAGISTRATE: These are your shoes, are they not? I believe I saw you wearing them just yesterday.

ABU KASIM: Yes, your honor, but I need to explain...

MAGISTRATE: No explanations. Return the shoes. (*Fisherman immediately sets about to getting the shoes out of the net and returning them to their owner.*) Abu Kasim, I am fining you 500 dinars for damages caused to this man's professional equipment and to compensate him for the resulting loss of income.

ABU KASIM: 500 dinars—again?!

MAGISTRATE: 1,000 if you complain. Now off with you!

ABU KASIM: (*puts on shoes*) Yes, your honor.

Abu Kasim slinks out through curtain 2, past the fisherman. As soon as Abu Kasim is gone, the rest burst into laughter.

Dunyazad also chuckles and perhaps even the king begins to be amused at this point.

MAGISTRATE: The court is adjourned!

They all exit. Stage crew moves table to other side of stage area, in front of curtain 3, and puts a tablecloth over it, and perhaps a few items on the table to indicate that this is now Abu Kasim's house.

SHAHRAZAD: So Abu Kasim had to walk home in his old shoes. When he got home, he began to lecture his shoes on what they had done to him.

Enter Abu Kasim, through curtain 3. He takes off his shoes and sets them on the table.

ABU KASIM: You rotten shoes! You are bringing me such bad luck! I shall be rid of you yet! How can I dispose of you without doing anyone any harm? *(He paces thinks for a few seconds.)* I know—I shall declare you deceased and give you a proper burial in my garden!

Abu Kasim, carrying his shoes, exits through curtain 3.

SHAHRAZAD: Abu Kasim went down to his garden and began digging a hole. His neighbors saw him digging and wondered what he was up to. They all knew that despite his ragged shoes he was a rich man, so they assumed he was burying some of his treasure. After Abu Kasim went back inside his house, the neighbors snuck into the garden and began to investigate.

Abu Kasim re-enters his house through curtain 3.

ABU KASIM: Ah... Gone, gone, gone! Gone at last! *(He pours himself a drink, sits down, or does some other trivial action such as eating grapes, or whatever is appropriate to the props you have set on his table.)*

SHAHRAZAD: While Abu Kasim was rejoicing over the final demise of his shoes, his neighbors were discovering what lay at the bottom of the hole.

Curtain 2 opens just far enough to reveal three neighbors all squatting down and looking as though they are peering down into a hole. One of them is holding a shovel to indicate they had been digging.

NEIGHBOR 1: There's no treasure here! It's only Abu Kasim's rotten old shoes!

NEIGHBOR 2: Ew! How disgusting!

NEIGHBOR 3: Look, the earthworms are rolling over and dying...we'd better save them!

NEIGHBOR 1: Let's take the shoes back to where they belong.

NEIGHBOR 2: Good idea!

NEIGHBOR 3: I'll get the shoes...

Curtain 2 closes quickly.

SHAHRAZAD: Abu Kasim was enjoying his peace and quiet, until...

The shoes come flying through curtain 3 and into Abu Kasim's house.

ABU KASIM: *(quite startled)* AH! You cursed shoes! Go away from me! You're possessed! Leave me! I never want to see you again!

Dunyazad and the king are laughing.

Abu Kasim picks up the shoes and throws them back out through the curtain. They are immediately tossed back in. He angrily throws them out again. As the second shoe disappears, there is a scream and a thud from behind the curtain.

ABU KASIM: AH! What is it now?!

He exits hastily through curtain 3. The set crew immediately comes and removes the added props and returns the table to the other side of the stage, as the magistrate's desk.

DUNYAZAD: What happened to the shoes?

SHAHRAZAD: Poor Abu Kasim! Those shoes found a way to cause even more trouble!

The magistrate enters, followed by the two servants, one holding Abu Kasim and the other holding the shoes. A woman with a bandaged head and arm is behind them.

MAGISTRATE: The plaintiff maintains that the cause of her injuries were these shoes. Are you the owner of these shoes?

ABU KASIM: Your honor, I...

MAGISTRATE: We have witnesses *(indicating the servants)* that can testify that you were here in this office with these very shoes on your feet just yesterday.

ABU KASIM: Yes, your honor.

MAGISTRATE: Can you prove otherwise?

ABU KASIM: No, your honor.

MAGISTRATE: The fine for personal injury is 1,000 dinars. I expect payment before sundown.

ABU KASIM: Yes, your honor.

MAGISTRATE: Now be off!

Abu Kasim backs away, starts toward the curtain, but then turns around and comes back.

ABU KASIM: There's one more thing, your honor.

MAGISTRATE: Yes?

ABU KASIM: I'd like a certificate of divorce.

MAGISTRATE: Divorce? But you aren't married.

ABU KASIM: I want to divorce...my shoes!!

MAGISTRATE: Divorce a pair of shoes?

ABU KASIM: Yes, I want to divorce my shoes! I declare in the presence of these witnesses and in front of this judge, that I, Abu Kasim, am no longer the owner of these shoes. Write this down please...

(The magistrate begins scribbling on a piece of paper as Abu Kasim speaks.)

These objects, these foul monstrosities, formerly known as my shoes, are no longer mine!

I hereby disassociate myself from these shoes and from any circumstances they may cause in the future. Let it be known that THESE... ARE... NOT... MY... SHOES!

He slams the shoes down on the desk. (If you can rig an event with the desk, this would add one last punch to the epic of the shoes.)

The magistrate immediately hands him the piece of paper and Abu Kasim grabs it and then marches off through curtain 2. As soon as he is gone, the others break into laughter.

Dunyazad and the king are laughing themselves silly.

MAGISTRATE: *(still laughing)* The court is adjourned.

They all exit as quickly as possible through curtain 2. On the way out you may want to have the magistrate, or someone else, comment again, "He divorced his shoes!" while laughing hysterically.

The set crew now retrieves all pieces used in this story.

SCENE 10

Shahrazad realizes that she must very quickly get the king hooked into another story so that she will be asked to continue it the next night. As the king and Dunyazad begin to cease laughing she says...

SHAHRAZAD: There must be something about the name Kasim. Kasim, the brother of Ali Baba, was also greedy. Oh, if only Kasim hadn't forgotten the magic words that opened the secret door!

DUNYAZAD: The secret door to what?

SHAHRAZAD: To the cave filled with treasure!

SHAHRIYAR: No, no, no. We must stop the stories. The night is far spent and dawn is just around the corner.

DUNYAZAD: Please, Sharazad, please. I want to hear the story about the treasure cave with the secret door and the magic words.

SHAHRAZAD: With the king's kind permission I shall tell it to you tomorrow night.

The girls both look at the king. Dunyazad gives the king a pleading look and clasps her hands in anticipation. There is a long pause as they await the answer.

SHAHRYR: *(with a long sigh)* All right... tomorrow night we will hear the story of the treasure cave.

Dunyazad quietly claps her hands in excitement.

SHAHRAZAD: Come now, Dunyazad, there is very little of the night left. I must get you to bed.

Shahrazad escorts Dunyazad out. They exit stage right. The king is left alone on stage. He lies back on the bed and closes his eyes.

SHAHRIYAR: *(sighs)* Funny stories, pleasant dreams... we'll see if she's right.

In a few moments, the lights indicating "night" go off. After another pause, the Vizier comes in. It is now morning. The vizier quietly and respectfully approaches the king. He is holding papers or scrolls. The king is just waking up. You may also want to have some male servants come and stand at the door.

VIZIER: Your majesty...

SHAHRIYAR: *(slowly coming to and sitting up)* Yes?

VIZIER: Your majesty, I have your morning news reports and your itinerary for the day.

SHAHRIYAR: Give me the itinerary first.

VIZIER: You have a meeting with your army generals at 9, with the ambassador from India at 10, and with your tax collectors at 11. After lunch, your brother requests a private audience with you in the garden. At your convenience, the royal architects would like to discuss with you their designs for the new royal baths.

SHAHRIYAR: You forgot to mention executions.

VIZIER: (*nervously*) I was... simply unaware of any.

SHAHRIYAR: As head vizier, I expect you to keep track of such things!

VIZIER: (*bowing*) Yes, your majesty. Your word is my command.

SHAHRIYAR: Now then. (*rises*) Vizier, have you ever heard reports of a miser of a man, living not more than ten streets from my palace garden, who has monstrously rotten shoes?

VIZIER: You want me to... execute him?

SHAHRIYAR: No, of course not. I want to meet him. It would be most entertaining.

VIZIER: (*suddenly realizing that Sharazad had told the story of the rotten shoes to the king*) Ah, yes. A man with shoes as rotten as... Abu Kasim's?

SHAHRIYAR: Yes, that's the fellow.

VIZIER: I've never seen or met him personally. I've only heard rumors.

SHAHRIYAR: Do you think you could arrange to have him brought to the palace?

VIZIER: Being only a humble vizier, and not a magician, I cannot promise to make him appear. But if your highness would be pleased to proceed to his meeting with the generals, I will have my servants look into the matter. (*The vizier gestures towards the door at stage left.*)

SHAHRIYAR: Yes, of course. We mustn't keep the generals waiting.

All exit stage

There is now a pause, to indicate the day passing. Slowly, the lights indicating night come back on.

Shahrazad enters from stage right, and seats herself on the bed. She begins to comb her hair.

Shahriyar enters slowly from stage left. He stops center stage and looks at Shahrazad.

SHAHRIYAR: The last time you sat and combed your hair, a little girl knocked at the door.

There is a knock.

SHAHRIYAR: Right on schedule.

Dunyazad peeks in and starts to enter slowly.

DUNYAZAD: Shahrazad, I can't wait any longer. What are the magic words that open the secret door? I spent all day trying to guess.

Dunyazad goes over and sits on bed next to Shahrazad.

SHAHRAZAD: With the king's kind permission, I will continue the story of Ali Baba and his brother, Kasim.

Dunyazad folds her hands together (as in petition) and looks at the king.

SHAHRIYAR: Is it funny?

SHAHRAZAD: Well... it's... clever. And it ends happily ever after.

Shahriyar doesn't reply right away. He looks at Dunyazad, who is silently pleading.

SHAHRIYAR: All right, but the next one has to be funny.

SHAHRAZAD: As your majesty wishes.

Shahrazad turns to Dunyazad. After Shahrazad starts the story, the king may either sit beside them, or go over to the other side of the room and sit down.

SCENE 11 **THE STORY OF ALI BABA AND THE BAND OF THIEVES**

SHAHRAZAD: Ali Baba and Kasim were brothers, but they were very different.

Enter Kasim and his wife from curtain 1. They are wearing fine clothes.

SHAHRAZAD: Kasim had married for money. His wife was a widow who had inherited her husband's fortune. The two of them were quite wealthy and were well respected in the town.

Enter Ali Baba and his wife from curtain 3. They are wearing very plain clothes. Ali Baba is holding a bag over his shoulder. He will need this prop in a few minutes.

SHAHRAZAD: Ali Baba had married for love. He and his wife were very poor, but they were happy together. Ali Baba never envied his brother, not did he ever ask him for money.

Exit Kasim and his wife and also Ali Baba's wife. While Shahrazad begins her next paragraph, the set crew should bring out the set piece behind which Ali Baba will hide, and place it stage left. The cave set should be ready to go, behind curtain 2. Two set crew members should be poised, one on each side of the curtain (out of view), ready to draw them apart when the magic words are said.

SHAHRAZAD: One day, Ali Baba went out into the forest to collect firewood. He walked for quite a distance

until he came to a place that he had never been to before. Wood was plentiful here and he was pleased to think how much firewood he would be able to gather in a short time. But before he had even drawn out his ax, he heard the sound of a large group of men approaching. Afraid that it might perhaps be a band of dangerous thieves, he found a place to hide.

Ali Baba hides behind whatever prop has been place for him-- perhaps a tree or bush.

Enter Hassan from curtain 1, with his thieves behind him. Each thief is carrying a bag over his shoulder. When they are all on stage, Hassan turns his face toward curtain 2 and speaks to it.

HASSAN: Open, Sesame!

Set crew draws the curtain back, as if it is opening by magic. The opened curtain reveals a collection of all kinds of dazzling treasures. Hassan and his crew go into the cave. Hassan stays center, facing the audience, while the thieves go to either side and disappear, as though into the cave, until Hassan is the only one visible. He stands, just inside the cave, facing the audience.

HASSAN: Close, Sesame!

Curtain 2 closes.

SHAHRAZAD: Ali Baba could hardly believe what he had just seen. It appeared that the thieves were using this secret cave to store their treasure. He dared not move. Certainly the thieves would come back out the way they had gone in.

After a pause, Hassan's voice is heard from behind the curtain.

HASSAN: Open, Sesame!

The curtain opens again. Hassan and his thieves exit the cave. The thieves exit through curtain 1. Hassan stays in front of the curtain.

HASSAN: Close, Sesame!

The curtain closes, then Hassan exits through curtain 1.

Ali Baba waits a few moments, then comes out from behind his hiding place.

ALI BABA: A secret treasure cave? I can't believe this! I'm going to be rich!

He approaches the curtain very slowly. Then he tries the magic words.

ALI BABA: Open, Sesame! *(or, perhaps, he could be more tentative, with a timid, "Open, Sesame?")*

The curtains are drawn back. Ali Baba slowly approaches the cave and goes inside. He starts filling his bag with coins or other treasures.

ALI BABA: I dare not stay too long. If the thieves return and find me here, I'm a dead man. I'll take what I can and just come back another time to get more.

He stops collecting and goes out of the cave. He turns to face the cave.

ALI BABA: Close, Sesame!

The curtain closes. He stands for a minute, looks at his bag (as if he hardly believes this is really happening), then runs off, through curtain 3.

SHAHRAZAD: Ali Baba went straight home to show his wife what good fortune had befallen them.

While Dunyazad and Shahrazad speak their next lines, the set crew retrieve the forest pieces and bring out the set pieces for the homes of Ali Baba and Kasim. Each "house" consists of a low table and several cushions to sit on. Ali Baba's furnishings are very plain. Those of Kasim are colorful and decorative, with perhaps a tea set or fancy vase on the table. Ali Baba's wife goes and sits on a cushion next to her table.

DUNYAZAD: Why didn't Ali Baba try to find out whose treasure it was and return it?

SHAHRAZAD: Can you imagine what would happen if Ali Baba held up a bag of gold coins in the market place and called out, "Do these belong to anyone?"

DUNYAZAD: I guess everyone would try to claim them.

SHAHRAZAD: It might have be fatal for Ali Baba. So Ali Baba came into his house and showed the bag of coins to his wife.

Enter Ali Baba. His wife is already seated at the low table.

ALI BABA: Dear wife, as of today our troubles are over!

He opens the bag, grabs a handful of coins and lays them on the table. Ali Baba's wife grabs the bag and looks inside it. She gasps then closes the bag again.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: Ali, have you become a thief? We are not so poor that you need to rob in order to eat! Give these back immediately!

ALI BABA: No, my dearest. I stole nothing. The band of thieves did the stealing, not I. I simply stumbled across their secret cave.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: A band of thieves? Did you see them?

ALI BABA: Yes, the worst sort of thieves you could possibly imagine. I hid myself and watched as their leader recited magic words that opened the cave. After they left I went over to the cave and said the magic words and it opened for me. This bag is but a tiny fraction of all the treasure contained in the cave.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: We must use it wisely and make it last a long time. I don't want you walking into danger again any time soon!

ALI BABA: Yes, you're right. And we can't let anyone know about it. Not even my brother, Kasim.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: Especially not your brother, Kasim.

ALI BABA: I plan to dig a hole next to the house, bury the treasure, and plant a small tree on top of it. That way, whenever we need to dig up some coins, if any neighbors happen to see us, they will think we are cultivating our tree.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: Good idea. But let me count the coins first.

ALI BABA: Why? It's easy to estimate that it should last us quite a while.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: I want to count them.

ALI BABA: All right, as you please. I'll go to the market to buy some small leather pouches. We'll bury them in sets of 50.

Ali Baba exits through curtain 3.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: *(starts to count)* 1, 2, 3, 4, 5... this is going to take all afternoon. It would be faster just to weigh them with a scale. Oh, but I sold our scale last month in order to buy these cushions. No matter. I'll just go over to Kasim's house and borrow a scale from my sister-in-law.

Ali Baba's wife goes across the stage to where the other "house" is, and pantomimes knocking on a door.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: Hello? Hello? Are you home?

Kasim's wife enters through curtain 1.

KASIM'S WIFE: Hello, darling sister-in-law. Come in. Please sit and join me for tea.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: I just want to borrow your scale, if I may.

KASIM'S WIFE: My scale? Why yes, of course. I'll get it right away.

She disappears behind curtain 1. Ali Baba's wife waits impatiently. Then Kasim's wife appears with the scale.

KASIM'S WIFE: Here you are, dearest sister-in-law. Happy measuring.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: Thank you. I'll return it soon.

Ali Baba's wife runs back to her "house" and begins weighing. Ali Baba enters with some small bags and they begin bagging the coins.

Meanwhile, at Kasim's house... Kasim enters. His wife has already sat down.

KASIM: Who was just here?

KASIM'S WIFE: Your sister-in-law. She came to borrow our scale.

KASIM: Our scale? What could Ali Baba possibly have that needs to be measured using a scale? *(mocking)* The dust on his floor? The dead flies on his window sill?

KASIM'S WIFE: We may be able to discover the truth without even asking any questions! Before I gave the scale to her, I put a fresh piece of wax on the bottom. Perhaps some of what she is measuring will stick to the wax and she won't notice.

KASIM: That was brilliant.

KASIM'S WIFE: *(smugly)* Thank you, my dear.

By now, Ali Baba and his wife will have finished weighing the coins. Ali Baba's wife goes back over to Kasim's house to return the scale.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: Good afternoon, Kasim. I've come to return your wife's scale.

KASIM: Ah, thank you dearest sister-in-law. We hardly missed it. Did you finish your weighing, then?

ALI BABA'S WIFE: Yes, thank you kindly for the loan. Good day!

Ali Baba's wife returns to her house. She helps Ali Baba finish putting the coins into the bags. Ali Baba exits behind curtain 3, as if to bury the coins.

Meanwhile, at Kasim's house...

KASIM'S WIFE: Well, shall we have a look?

She takes the scale from Kasim and turns it over, revealing the bottom to the audience. There is a gold coin stuck to the bottom. Kasim should position himself so he can also see the coin without obstructing the audience's view of it. They both gasp.

KASIM: My brother has been measuring gold coins?! Impossible! He's as poor as a dervish! I'm going to

pay Ali Baba a visit right now and find out what's going on!

Kasim marches over to Ali Baba's "house."

KASIM: Ali Baba!

Ali Baba goes over to Kasim.

ALI BABA: Brother, greetings to you! Please, come in.

KASIM: Ali Baba, what is the meaning of this measuring business. How dare you act as though you are barely surviving when in reality you have so much gold that you must measure it with scales!

ALI BABA: I... I don't know what you are talking about.

KASIM: Don't play games with me, Ali Baba. My wife stuck a piece of wax on the bottom of the scale and when the scale was returned, there was a gold coin on the bottom. You've been measuring gold!

ALI BABA: Yes, Kasim, I confess, that is the truth. My wife and I were measuring gold coins. But we only got them just today. That's the honest truth.

KASIM: Ali Baba, I should report you to the authorities. You are a thief!

ALI BABA: No, Kasim, I did not steal them. I promise I did not steal them!

KASIM: Then tell me how you could possibly have become rich in one day.

SHAHRAZAD: So Ali Baba told Kasim the whole story about the band of thieves and the treasure cave.

(Meanwhile, Ali Baba is pantomiming talking to Kasim, and making appropriate hand gestures.) He told him the location of the cave and the secret password. He told Kasim not to go to the cave alone, as it was far too dangerous. Kasim promised not to go alone, but this was, in fact, exactly what he intended to do.

Kasim leaves Ali Baba's house and goes back to his house.

All four exit, and the set crew should remove all house items.

DUNYAZAD: If I were Kasim, I wouldn't go to the cave without Ali Baba. One of them could stand outside and keep a look out for the thieves, while the other went inside the cave to collect treasure.

SHAHRAZAD: That would have been a very smart plan. Kasim's wife said the very same thing. However, Kasim was not only greedy, he was a bit stupid, as well. The next day he gathered up as many bags as he thought he possibly could carry, and headed off to the cave without Ali Baba. By noon, he had arrived at the treasure cave.

Enter Kasim from curtain 1, with several sacks over his shoulder. He goes and stands in front of curtain 2. He pulls a small paper note from his pocket at reads it aloud.

KASIM: Open... Sesame.

The curtains part to reveal the treasure cave. Kasim tosses the piece of paper behind him and goes into the cave. He begins putting things into one of his bags. He turns his back to the audience and the curtain, and the curtains close. After a few seconds you hear Kasim from behind the curtain.

KASIM: Uh-oh. Ah... Um.... Open, Barley! *(nothing happens)* Open... Chestnut! *(pause)* Open... Poppy seed! *(pause)* Open... Couscous! *(pause)* Open... Sorghum! *(pause)* Open... Falafel! Open up you stupid doors! Open! Argh!

Now the sound of the band of thieves can be heard approaching from behind curtain 3. Hassan enters first then the others follow. A thief notices the paper on the floor and picks it up. Kasim needs to move to where he will be out of view of the audience when the curtains open again, then he needs to get into one of the very large sacks he was carrying.

THIEF 1: Hey, what's this?

Hassan grabs the note and reads it.

HASSAN: Open, Sesame? Someone has discovered our cave! He might even be inside at this very moment. Men, arm yourselves. Prepare to catch a thief! *(He raises his arms and speaks grandly.)* Open, Sesame!

The thieves draw their swords. The curtains opens. The instant the gap is wide enough, Kasim comes bolting out of the cave at full speed. He runs right into a line of thieves and they capture him.

HASSAN: Take him into the cave and kill him!

The thieves drag the screaming Kasim back into the cave. Then, they stand poised with their swords in the air over Kasim, who is huddled on the ground. Hassan has his back to the audience, standing in front of Kasim. One of the thieves looks out at the audience (perhaps even pointing) and says to Hassan:

THIEF 2: Don't you think we'd better "Close, Sesame?"

The curtain immediately closes.

HASSAN: *(from behind the curtain)* Hey! That's my job!

THIEF 2: Sorry.

Now the sound of clashing swords and yelling thieves is heard from behind the curtain. Kasim gives one final scream. During these moments, Kasim exits to backstage. A large pre-prepared sack is brought out and placed in the center of the cave. It should look like it has a body inside it, but be light enough for the actor playing Ali Baba to be able to drag across the stage. (You might consider putting into the sack a spooky “Halloween” body part (such as a severed hand or foot) that Ali Baba can pull out in the next scene.)

HASSAN: We'll leave his body here as a warning to anyone else who dares to enter our cave! Now, let us depart on another venture!

THIEF 2: Can I say, “Open, Sesame?”

The curtain immediately flies open.

HASSAN: Quit doing my job for me!! Close, Sesame!

The curtain closes.

HASSAN: *(grandly)* OPEN, SESAME!

The curtain opens again. Hassan goes to center stage and the thieves gather around him.

HASSAN: Close, Sesame! *(curtain closes)* Men, I hear a caravan in the distance. Yalla! *(“Let’s go!”)*

Hassan rushes out through curtain 1 and all the thieves follow yelling, “Yalla!”

SHAHRAZAD: Kasim had been gone a long time, and his wife began to get worried that something terrible had happened. Ali Baba promised her that he would go to the cave to find out what had happened to Kasim.

Ali Baba enters through curtain 3. He approaches the cave very slowly and cautiously.

ALI BABA: *(softly)* Kasim? *(slightly louder)* Kasim?

Now he stands in front of curtain 2.

ALI BABA: Open, Sesame!

The curtain opens to reveal a large sack sitting among the treasure. Ali Baba approaches the sack. He opens the top of the sack and looks inside. If there is a severed hand or foot in the bag Ali Baba can pull it out. Otherwise, Ali Baba continues to stare into the sack. (In the real story, the thieves cut Kasim into four pieces and each piece is nailed onto the wall of the cave.)

ALI BABA: Kasim, you... you're... you've gone to pieces.

If he is holding a body part he puts it back into the bag. Then Ali Baba kneels down and hugs the bag.

ALI BABA: Oh, Kasim! I told you not to come alone! You silly brother! *(Then Ali Baba stands up.)* Well, I must get you back home. I will give you a splendid funeral. But wait a minute. I'll need to pay for the splendid funeral. *He grabs one of the other sacks that Kasim had left and he puts some trinkets or coins into it quickly.*

ALI BABA: There. Now let's be off.

Ali Baba exits through curtain 3, hauling the bag with “Kasim” in it, plus the treasure bag. The stage crew now needs to bring onto stage the low table and pillows to represent Ali Baba's house. You can use the more decorative ones now, since Ali Baba has become wealthy. Place items on stage left.

SHAHRAZAD: So Ali Baba gave Kasim a splendid funeral. He also spent a bit of money on himself and bought new clothes, a larger house, and a servant to help his wife with the housework. The servant's name was Marjana and she turned out to be the best investment that Ali Baba would ever make.

SCENE 12

Enter from curtain 3 Marjana and Ali Baba's wife. They sit on the cushions, at the low table. They could be sewing, perhaps, or having tea. There needs to be some kind of distinctive-looking vase on the table.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: So that's what happened to poor Kasim. Although I must say, he brought it upon himself.

MARJANA: What happened to the band of thieves?

ALI BABA'S WIFE: They're still out there robbing caravans. They don't know about Ali Baba. They think Kasim was the only person to discover their cave.

MARJANA: But surely they saw that the body of Kasim was gone from the cave.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: They probably figured that a wild animal dragged it off.

MARJANA: Wild animals can't say “Open, Sesame.”

ALI BABA'S WIFE: But perhaps there is another way into the cave. Ali Baba mentioned some kind of crack in the ceiling of the cave that let in some light.

Ali Baba enters through curtain 3 just in time to hear this next question. The women don't see him until he speaks.

MARJANA: Would Ali Baba be able to recognize any of the thieves if they came into town disguised as merchants?

ALI BABA: No, I don't think I could. I might recognize their leader, but not any of the thieves. They were all too far away when I saw them.

MARJANA: So how would we know if they were here?

ALI BABA: We'll just keep our eyes and ears open. That's the best we can do. I'm going to the market now. I'll be back before sundown.

Ali Baba exits through curtain 3.

SHAHRAZAD: Meanwhile, the thieves discovered that Kasim's body was missing from the cave, as well as even more of their treasure. They figured out that someone other than Kasim had discovered how to enter their cave.

Enter from curtain 1, a small group of townspeople carrying various items that they might be buying or selling at the market. One of them will be "Townsperson 1."

SHAHRAZAD: The leader, Hassan, decided to disguise himself and go into town to ask the villagers if they knew anyone who had suddenly become wealthy in recent months.

Enter Hassan. He has tried to disguise himself by putting a plain cloak over his thief outfit and wearing a false beard. He mingles in the crowd briefly then goes up to Townsperson 1.

HASSAN: Excuse, me, (sir/madam). I know this is a strange question, but do you have any neighbors who have suddenly become quite wealthy in recent times. For reasons I can't go into, I believe that such a person is a relative of mine. I need to contact him with important information about the inheritance.

TOWNSPERSON 1: It could Ali Baba. He's always been poor as a dervish but just recently he purchased a new house and hired a servant.

HASSAN: Can you direct me to his house?

TOWNSPERSON 1: *(leads him over to Ali Baba's house)* Yes, he lives right here.

HASSAN: Thank you very much.

TOWNSPERSON: Sure, no problem. *(He wanders off again.)*

Hassan now pantomimes looking in through a window. (Could also pantomime sneaking along wall first, to give the impression of where the invisible side of the house is.)

HASSAN: I recognize that vase! That's mine! So help me, Ali Baba, I'll get every last treasure back from you! *(He turns around, to think.)* But I must think of a plan to get my men in here without making anyone suspicious. Hmm....

Hassan then goes to the "door" and "knocks." Marjana goes to the door.

HASSAN: Good afternoon. Is your master at home?

MARJANA: No, but my mistress is. He trusts her in everything. Would you like to speak to her?

HASSAN: Yes, thank you.

Marjana goes and gets Ali Baba's wife. She goes to the door.

HASSAN: Madame, I am a wheat merchant. I have come to your town today to offer you and your neighbors a once-in-a-decade deal on wheat. You see, my fields produced an unexpectedly large harvest this season and I have sacks of grain for sale at only two dinars a piece.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: Two dinars for a sack of grain? That's marvelous! How many sacks can I buy?

HASSAN: I can offer you *(fill in the number of thieves you have)* sacks.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: Well, I'll take all of them.

HASSAN: I will return tomorrow to deliver the sacks of wheat and collect my payment.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: We'll be expecting you.

HASSAN: Thank you for your business. Until then...

He bows, backs away from the door, turns, walks through the crowd, and exits through curtain 1. The crowd exits after him.

SHAHRAZAD: Hassan hurried back to his band of thieves and they made their preparations. He told his thieves to sneak into town in the middle of the night and go to Ali Baba's house. Each thief would hide in a grain sack. When Hassan came to collect payment from Ali Baba the next morning, he would give the signal and they would all jump out, kill everyone in Ali Baba's household and haul away the treasure in their sacks.

Enter the thieves from curtain 1, each carrying a giant sack. They line up in front of the imaginary front wall of Ali Baba's house, get into their sacks, and pull them shut over their heads.

SHAHRAZAD: Now it happened that Marjana, woke up very early that morning, before the sun came up.

Enter Marjana from curtain 3, holding a broom.

MARJANA: *(yawns)* I think I'll get an early start on my work today. Maybe I can finish early and have some

free time this evening. *(She begins sweeping, then suddenly stops.)* Hmm... Maybe I should sweep along the side of the house and clear a place for the sacks of grain that will be arriving this morning.

Marjana goes out and turns the invisible corner of the house and sees the sacks of grain already there.

SHAHRAZAD: Marjana was very surprised to see that the sacks of grain had apparently been delivered in the middle of the night. This seemed a bit suspicious to her, and she decided to investigate.

Marjana kneels down and examines the bags. She pokes the first one. The thief speaks.

THIEF: *(whispering loudly)* Hassan, is that you? Is it time?

MARJANA: *(trying to lower her voice, and whispering loudly)* No, not yet.

She goes and pokes the next bag.

THIEF: *(whispering loudly)* Hassan, is that you? Is it time?

MARJANA: *(whispering loudly)* No, no yet.

She goes and pokes a third bag.

THIEF: Hassan, is that you? Is it time?

MARJANA: No, not yet.

Marjana stands up and looks at all the bags. She pauses, thinks, then goes back into the house.

SHAHRAZAD: Marjana knew that she would have to find a way to get rid of the thieves without making any noise. If one of the thieves jumped up and sounded the alarm, Ali Baba's household was doomed.

Marjana goes back into the house and disappears through curtain 3.

SHAHRAZAD: They say that every cloud has a silver lining. Good and bad are sometimes like the two sides of a coin. Just three days ago, Marjana had discovered rats destroying their garden and she had purchased a remedy from the apothecary.

Enter Marjana holding a very large bottle labeled as rat poison.

MARJANA: The apothecary told me this works "quickly and quietly." Just what I need. I'll poison some rats, all right—human rats!

Marjana goes out to the sacks and pantomimes pouring poison in, or over, them. This needs to be done relatively quickly. The thieves start rolling onto their sides while staying in the sacks so it looks as though they have been poisoned to death. Then Marjana goes back into the house and exits through curtain 3.

SHAHRAZAD: Then Hassan arrived at the crack of dawn.

Enter Hassan from curtain 1. He goes over to the sacks.

HASSAN: Men, the time has come! *(No response.)* Men, up and ready, this is the signal! *(No response.)*

Attack! *(Then he starts investigating the sacks. He opens one and looks in. Then another.)* What?! How can this be? Who has done this? *(Then he straightens up and tries to regain composure.)* Ali Baba, you'll pay dearly for this. I'll avenge the deaths of every one of my comrades before the sun sets today!

Hassan runs out through curtain 1.

DUNYAZAD: What happened to the thieves?

SHAHRAZAD: Marjana cleverly told the townspeople that the sacks were full of rats and other vermin she had poisoned in their garden.

Enter enough townspeople (from curtain 1) to be able to haul away all the sacks with the thieves still inside.

Enter Marjana from curtain 3. She goes out to supervise.

SHAHRAZAD: Of course, no one wanted to open the bags to see dead rats! They just took the bags and threw them into a pit and covered it over. And that was the end of the thieves.

MARJANA: Thank you all for your help. Good riddance of these vermin! May your homes and gardens never be infested with the likes of these!

The townspeople disappear all the sacks through curtain 1. Marjana exits through curtain 3.

SHAHRAZAD: Ali Baba and his wife had no idea how narrowly they had escaped death.

DUNYAZAD: What about Hassan? Did he come back?

SHAHRAZAD: Of course he did. He had to get his revenge.

Enter Ali Baba, his wife, and Marjana carrying a tray containing dishes and food items. They sit down to eat.

ALI BABA: *(to his wife)* That wheat merchant you were telling me about—when did he say he would arrive?

ALI BABA'S WIFE: He just said he would be back in the morning.

Enter Hassan, from curtain 1. He goes over to the house and looks around. He doesn't see the sacks. He scratches his head and takes one more look, then goes to the door. He should knock on the door right after Ali Baba says "...a problem lately."

ALI BABA: Where are we going to put that many more sacks of grain? Our storage pits are already full.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: I suppose we'll have to dig another one. Or better yet, let's build an above-ground chamber made of brick, so the rats can't get in.

ALI BABA: Good idea. The vermin have been a problem lately.

Hassan knocks on the door.

MARJANA: *(to herself)* Speaking of vermin...

Ali Baba rises to greet Hassan.

HASSAN: Ali Baba?

ALI BABA: Yes, I am sorry I missed you yesterday. Please, come in.

Hassan enters their house and they are all seated on cushions (except for Marjana).

ALI BABA'S WIFE: Do you have the grain? I'll have Marjana fetch your payment right away.

HASSAN: Ah, yes. About the grain... You see... a... it seems that there's been some kind of miscommunication somehow. I expected to see the sacks of grain already delivered and sitting outside your house. I ordered that they be delivered very early, you see.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: Marjana, do you know about any delivery of sacks of grain before dawn?

MARJANA: Oh yes, I took care of them. *(Then, carefully pronouncing each word so that Hassan will understand her hint...)* Every-- one-- of-- them. *(She then disappears through curtain 3.)*

ALI BABA: Well, then. They've been taken care of. Please join us for refreshments and perhaps we can discuss another transaction.

HASSAN: You bought the last of this year's harvest.

Marjana comes back in with some kind of food or beverage.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: What else do you sell? Do you cultivate barley or oats?

HASSAN: Ah... no, actually... I... ah... I specialize in sesame.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: Oh, I do appreciate good sesame oil. Ali, let's buy some sesame oil.

MARJANA: *(to Ali Baba)* Master, would care for some entertainment while you eat? I could dance for you.

ALI BABA: Yes, that would be fine. We'll entertain our guest.

At this point, you may stage the dance scene as best fits your situation. Marjana can bring Ali Baba a drum and he can accompany her. Or you may provide recorded music. Add any "small talk" necessary.

Marjana begins to dance. You may have her dance for the length of time appropriate for your audience. As Marjana concludes her dance, she comes close to Hassan, as if to flirt with him. She suddenly pulls out her dagger and stabs him. He falls over backward.

ALI BABA: Marjana! What have you done? You have ruined us!

MARJANA: I have saved you! This man is none other than the leader of the band of thieves!

She goes over and pulls off his fake beard and also reveals the dagger he had hidden under his cloak.

MARJANA: This man came here to kill you and take back all the treasure! I discovered his men inside the grain sacks early this morning.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: What did you do?

MARJANA: I poured poison over them and killed them. Then I had them dragged out of town and buried.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: All before breakfast?

MARJANA: Yes. Then when this so-called "merchant" showed up at the door I knew he would discover his men gone and would have to resort to killing you himself.

ALI BABA: Marjana, how can I ever repay you for saving our lives? I must give you your freedom immediately.

MARJANA: I am in no hurry to leave you, master. I have no desire to work for anyone else.

ALI BABA: But you must not be a servant any longer. I must make you part of our family.

ALI BABA'S WIFE: We have a nephew just about your age. And he's VERY available... *(wink, wink)*

ALI BABA: Splendid idea! Let's go and prepare to pay him a visit!

The all exit through curtain 3, possibly carrying a few props with them. The stage crew then comes and removes the set pieces and drags the dead Hassan off the stage.

SHAHRAZAD: And so the humble servant girl, Marjana, saved her master's household and became part of their family.

DUNYAZAD: And then what?

SHAHRAZAD: They lived happily ever after, of course. They kept the secret of the cave and no one else ever found out about it. And... if the king permits me, I will tell an even better story tomorrow night.

SHAHRIYAR: The king permits on one condition. *(pause)* It must be funny.

SHAHRAZAD: Then funny it shall be.

Shahriyar stands up.

SHAHRIYAR: Shall we walk Dunyazad to her quarters?

Shahrazad stands up.

SHAHRAZAD: Yes, we shall.

Dunyazad stays on the bed, unwilling to come.

SHAHRAZAD: Let us dance for Ali Baba!

Dance music begins again (either same as in Ali Baba or something else). Shahrazad takes Dunyazad by the hand, pulls her up and they both begin swirling around. They do one loop around the stage, then disappear through the door at stage right. Shahriyar exits after them. The night lights dim. (The music can either be turned off, or just turned down slightly if you plan to have music during intermission.)

INTERMISSION

ACT 2

SCENE 1

Shahriyar enters from stage left with Shah Zaman following him.

SHAHRIYAR: The sunset was especially spectacular this evening, wasn't it?

SHAH ZAMAN: Yes, certainly. The silhouettes of your domes and your minarets against the fiery red evening sky... a stunning site! You've created an architectural paradise, Shahriyar.

Shahriyar goes over and sits on the bed.

SHAHRIYAR: And my gardens?

SHAH ZAMAN: Exquisite, of course. How do you do it?

SHAHRIYAR: I pay my gardeners well. And my architects. I've drawn the very best from all over the world.

SHAH ZAMAN: Imagine if the sun and the stars demanded a salary for their evening performances!

Shahrazad enters from stage right, sees Shah Zaman. There is a awkward moment where the three look at each other.

SHAHRAZAD: Excuse me, your highnesses. I don't mean to interrupt. I shall return later.

Shahrazad quickly exits again.

Shah Zaman looks at Shahriyar.

SHAH ZAMAN: Was that who I think it is?

SHAHRIYAR: Why? Who do you think it is?

SHAH ZAMAN: *(pause)* The woman you swore an oath to execute?

SHAHRIYAR: *(pause)* Possibly.

SHAH ZAMAN: Shahriyar, women are evil, remember?! Didn't you learn your lesson? You're lucky she hasn't put poisonous snakes in your bed, or something! Why didn't you get rid of her?

SHAHRIYAR: Because... well....

SHAH ZAMAN: The truth, Shahriyar! Why is she still alive?

SHAHRIYAR: Because... because I wanted to hear the end of the story.

SHAH ZAMAN: The what?

SHAHRIYAR: It wasn't just any story—it was about a decapitated head that survived long enough to pronounce judgement on the king who had ordered the execution.

SHAH ZAMAN: A talking head? What kind of woman tells sick-o bedtime stories like that? I'll tell you what kind—the dangerous kind! The kind you can't trust, Shahriyar!

SHAHRIYAR: No, not just that—there was a funny one, too.

SHAH ZAMAN: Shahriyar, I never knew you were so interested in stories. I thought you disdained them.

SHAHRIYAR: Hers are different.

SHAH ZAMAN: Wow, she must be some storyteller!

SHAHRIYAR: Why don't you see for yourself?

SHAH ZAMAN: Me? How?

SHAHRIYAR: Hide here in the room and listen for yourself. She promised a funny story tonight.

SHAH ZAMAN: Okay, I'll play along, Shahriyar. I'll play along. Go ahead. Hide me.

Shahriyar looks about for a place to conceal Shah Zaman. He indicates where to hide (perhaps behind an oriental screen, or a plant or some other large object). Once he is hidden, Shahriyar goes over and sits on the bed and waits for Shahrazad to come in again, which she does.

Shahrazad enters again from stage right. She looks about to see that Shah Zaman has gone.

SHAHRAZAD: May I?

SHAHRIYAR: Yes, of course.

Dunyazad then zips out from behind Shahrazad and flings herself onto the bed.

SHAHRIYAR: Let's see... as I remember it was going to be...

DUNYAZAD: ...a funny story! She promised a funny story tonight!

SHAHRAZAD: Yes, a funny story. It shall be... the story of the bottomless bag. One night, long, long ago, the illustrious caliph, Harun Al Rashid, was having a restless night. He called in his vizier and said, "Vizier, I cannot sleep. My mind is full of the cares and anxieties of the day. Fetch me something to cheer me and relax me." The vizier answered, "Sire, I have heard of a man named Ali, who is known for his entertaining stories. They say his stories can remove sorrow from anyone's heart." Then Harun Al Rashid said, "Bring him to me." So Ali came and sat before the caliph. He asked the caliph, "Your majesty, would you like me to tell you something that I have heard with my ears, or something that I have seen with my eyes?" The caliph thought for a moment, then said, "Tell me about something you've seen." And Ali answered...

SCENE 2

THE STORY OF THE BOTTOMLESS BAG

Enter Ali from curtain 2. He has a bag over his shoulder.

ALI: I recently spent a whole year traveling about, exploring the world. I carried with me nothing but a small bag in which I kept only a few necessary items and whatever food I had purchased at the market for my daily provisions. One day I went to a certain city and wandered through the market place.

Enter various townspeople from curtains 1, 2 or 3. The more townspeople the better. It should look like a bustling marketplace. Suddenly, a swindler comes along and takes the bag off Ali's shoulder.

SWINDLER: This is my bag! How dare you steal my bag! Return it at once!

ALI: *(trying to take it back)* Excuse me, but this is MY bag. How dare you take it from me?

The townspeople stop and take notice of what is going on.

SWINDLER: Oh, no, sir. This bag and all its contents are most certainly mine.

ALI: You are mistaken, sir. I brought this bag with me all the way from Baghdad.

SWINDLER: I must differ with you. I have owned this bag for over two years. I have been searching for it all morning.

ALI: I have been holding this bag all morning. *(to a townspeople)* You, there! You saw me carrying this bag just now. And you saw him take it from me, didn't you?

TOWNSPERSON: Sirs, don't involve me in your dispute. Please take your disagreement to the magistrate.

SWINDLER: Yes, let us certainly take our dispute to the magistrate.

ALI: *(asking anyone who will listen)* And where is the magistrate's office?

TOWNSPERSON *(can be a different townspeople)*: Just around the corner. In fact, I'll just go and get him. *(This townspeople exits through curtain 2.)*

ALI: *(to swindler)* You're not going to win this one. The bag really is mine, and only I know what it contains. Why are you doing this?

SWINDLER: We shall see... Let us defer to the magistrate's decision.

Enter townspeople from curtain 2, accompanied by magistrate. The magistrate stays in front of curtain 2 and the townspeople form a semi-circle with the magistrate at the center. Ali and the swindler stand in the middle of the semi-circle, a bit apart from each other. The swindler is holding the bag.

MAGISTRATE: And which of you is the defendant?

SWINDLER: Your honor, this bag and its contents are mine.

MAGISTRATE: Place the disputed object here in front of me.

The swindler places the bag in front of the magistrate.

SWINDLER: I lost this bag yesterday and then found it in the possession of this man today.

MAGISTRATE: You lost the bag yesterday?

SWINDLER: Yes. I spent a sleepless night last night on account of the loss of this bag.

ALI: It is not your bag! It's my bag! You took it off my shoulder not more than ten minutes ago!

MAGISTRATE: (*holding up his hand to Ali*) Please! (*then turning to the swindler*) If the bag is indeed the defendant's property, as he claims, he will doubtless be able to tell me the contents of the bag.

SWINDLER: Of course I can. It's my bag. Let's see... there are two spoons, a small dish, a plate, a hand towel, a woven mat... and... a cooking pot, a silver ladle... two golden candlesticks wrapped in a piece of fine linen...a loaf of bread, a bag of raisins... and a mattress.

MAGISTRATE: (*does a double-take*) A mattress?

SWINDLER: Yes, I like to carry a spare mattress when I travel.

Everyone looks down at the bags and either scratches their head or murmurs or chuckles. Ali must chuckle out loud or look amused in an obvious way. He must indicate that he has decided to play along with the swindler's game.

MAGISTRATE: Does the accused have a statement to make about the contents of the bag?

ALI: A mattress, eh? This gentleman has no idea what is in the bag. I can tell you that this bag contains a fishing net, some tent pegs, a turban, three silk pillows, a diamond worth 1000 dinars, and... a camel!

MAGISTRATE: A camel? In this bag?

SWINDLER: Don't listen to him, your honor. There is no camel in the bag. The bag contains a dozen apples, a cake of figs, a table and two chairs, and... a flock of sheep!

MAGISTRATE: A flock of sheep?

ALI: It most certainly does not. In this bag is a couch, a bed, a dog kennel, a fox, a bear, and a lion!

Now the conversations starts turning into a tennis match, with the crowd looking back and forth from one speaker to the other.

SWINDLER: This bag contains a small house, a cow with two calves, a pair of oxen and a plow, two mares and a stallion, a dozen barking dogs... AND... twenty men who will testify that this bag is mine!

ALI: I think his honor will find upon opening the bag that it contains an entire palace, complete with gardens, vineyards, and orchards. And...an entire army of soldiers surrounding the palace, each of whom will testify that his bag is mine.

NOTE: Shah Zaman begins chuckling at some point in the story. The audience can see him laughing, but Shahrazad does not see or hear him.

SWINDLER: No, no, no. In this bag are ten cities, fifty storehouses containing enough wheat to feed all of Persia, and a hundred stables filled with Arabian thoroughbreds. And...a cathedral, a mosque, a Turkish bath, a fortress, and lots of wide open spaces filled with all manner of beasts and birds. And a wedding procession making its way across those fields, with musicians playing flutes and mandolins and drums, and women dancing, and boys and girls waving colorful banners and singing joyously. And each person in that procession will testify that this bag is mine!

ALI: (*looking squarely at the swindler*) The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers are in this bag!

SWINDLER: (*staring him back*) The cities of Basra and Baghdad!

ALI: The whole of Solomon's empire!

SWINDLER: India, Africa, and everything that lies between!

There is a pause. The magistrate is speechless. (Hopefully the audience is laughing!) He slowly picks up the bags and looks at it. He looks at the swindler and then at Ali.

MAGISTRATE: Does this bag have a bottom inside? (*pause, as he stares at the bag*) There is no container or earth that can hold everything you have described!

SWINDLER: I forgot to mention one more thing that this bag contains.

MAGISTRATE: Just one?

SWINDLER: Yes. A very sharp razor with which to shave off the magistrate's beard unless he fears my vengeance and rules that this bag is mine!

MAGISTRATE: (*straightens up*) It's time to open the bag! Let us see its contents!

The magistrate opens the bag and empties its contents onto the floor. A few food items drop out, and possibly a small towel or plate or spoon.)

The crowd begins to laugh. Ali goes over and puts the items back into the bag and then hands the bag to the swindler.

ALI: Here, pal. You earned your lunch! Have a nice day.

The swindler runs out through curtain 2. The crowd is laughing as they exit as quickly as possible through various curtains. The magistrate, the swindler and Ali also exit.

SCENE 3

Shah Zaman begins laughing with the crowd, and continues to laugh out loud even after the crowd has left the stage. (In the original tales, the story is told to Harun Al Rashid, who laughs so hard he falls off his chair.) Dunyazad and Shahriyar are also laughing but stop laughing before Shah Zaman does. The three on the bed look over to where Shah Zaman is hiding. Zaman stops laughing and realizes he had given himself away.

SHAHRAZAD: I have a larger audience tonight.

DUNYAZAD: *(calling out)* Who is it?

SHAH ZAMAN: *(comes out of hiding)* My compliments to the storyteller. I was merely verifying the truth of what I had been told about your marvelous talent. I shall now retire to my apartments.

SHAHRAZAD: But the story isn't finished. You must stay and hear the rest.

SHAHRIYAR: Yes, it works out rather nicely—two brothers, two sisters.

SHAHRAZAD: And two swindlers! After the swindler left Ali, he joined up with a friend of his—a man just as clever as himself.

DUNYAZAD: If they were so clever, why didn't they apply themselves to a trade or become entertainers in a palace?

SHAHRAZAD: They did end up in a sultan's palace, but first they played a nasty trick on a poor unsuspecting peasant who was simply walking along with his donkey.

Shah Zaman sits down as Shahrazad begins talking. Or, you may want to have Shahrazad go over and (using actions and body language) encourage Shah Zaman to sit down again.

THE STORY OF THE STOLEN DONKEY

Enter donkey and owner of donkey from curtain 2. The owner is walking along with his donkey behind him. The donkey is wearing a bridle and the owner is holding the reins loosely.

Enter the two swindlers from curtain 2. The swindler from the previous story is now swindler 1.

SWINDLER 2: The way you got that bag is pretty impressive but let me show you what I can do. I can steal that donkey and have its owner thank me for doing so.

SWINDLER 1: Go to it!

SWINDLER 2: You'll be in charge of the donkey.

SWINDLER 1: Okay.

Swindler 2 sneaks up behind the donkey and gently removes the bridle from the donkey's head. He passes the donkey off to swindler 1 and then puts the bridle over his own head. He walks along pretending to be the donkey. Meanwhile, swindler 1 takes the donkey out through curtain 2, then immediately returns to watch what swindler 2 will do. He sits down at a distance, out of the way.

SWINDLER 2: Hee-haw, hee-haw! *(Owner of donkey does not look back.)* When can we stop and get a drink? I'm dying of thirst!

Owner of donkey stops suddenly but does not turn around. Swindler 2 bumps into him, then backs up. Both are now standing still.

OWNER OF DONKEY: *(without turning around)* I think I must need a drink, too. Maybe severe dehydration can cause hallucinations. My donkey's braying is starting to sound like human speech. I must be really thirsty.

SWINDLER 2: Some food would be nice, too. I'm hungry.

There is a dramatic pause and the audience can see that the owner of the donkey is afraid to turn around.

OWNER OF DONKEY: I am going to turn around now, and no matter what I see, I will maintain my composure and deal with it rationally.

He slowly turns around, sees the man wearing the bridle, and faints. Swindler 2 catches him and lowers him to the ground.

SWINDLER 2: Master, master! Please recover yourself! I can explain everything.

The owner of the donkey is in a swoon but gradually recovers.

OWNER OF DONKEY: What? Who are you? What's going on?

SWINDLER 2: Don't worry, you're not going crazy. You're just fine. And it's not your fault. You didn't know that I was under a magic spell. I don't blame you for anything.

OWNER OF DONKEY: Who are you?

SWINDLER 2: I'm your donkey—I mean I WAS your donkey. When you bought me in the marketplace I was already under this enchantment. It wasn't your fault. I had no way of telling you. Every time I tried to talk it just came out like, "Hee-haw, hee-haw."

OWNER OF DONKEY: How did you get to be a donkey?

SWINDLER 2: It was my punishment for beating my own donkey. I used to get very angry at my stubborn old donkey and would take to beating him with a stick. Little did I know that my next-door neighbor was a wizard. One day he saw me beating my donkey and he said to me, "If I see you beating your donkey one more time I'll turn you into a donkey!" Well, that scared me enough to make me stop being my donkey for a few weeks, but one day I couldn't help myself and I did it again. When the wizard saw me beating my donkey, he said a bunch of magical words and suddenly I became a donkey. He said, "Let that teach you a lesson. It will wear off eventually, but I can't say exactly when. Some day you'll just be walking along the street and the magic will wear off and you'll be a human again."

OWNER OF DONKEY: So today was your lucky day?

SWINDLER 2: I guess so.

OWNER OF DONKEY: That was a long curse.

SWINDLER: How long did you own me?

OWNER OF DONKEY: Oh, I'd say it's been at least seven years now.

SWINDLER: Seven years, missing from my life...

OWNER OF DONKEY: (*getting up*) Here, I must give you something. I must pay you for serving me. I owe you seven years of wages.

SWINDLER 2: Oh, no, please don't feel obligated. The fault was mine. Remember, I was being punished.

OWNER OF DONKEY: But I must give you something. (*He reaches into his small bag and pulls out a few gold coins.*) Here, take this at least.

SWINDLER 2: Master—I mean Mister—you're too kind.

OWNER OF DONKEY: It's the least I can do.

SWINDLER 2: With your permission, I'll be on my way now.

OWNER OF DONKEY: Yes, please do. You're free to go. Thanks for everything.

SWINDLER 2: It was a pleasure serving you. Goodbye!

OWNER OF DONKEY: Yes, goodbye.

Owner of donkey exits through curtain 1 or 3.

Swindler 2 goes over to swindler 1. Swindler 1 stands up to greet him. Swindler 2 holds up the gold coins for swindler 1 to see.

SWINDLER 2: This turned out even better than I thought it would! I made money on the deal.

SWINDLER 1: Plus, we can sell the donkey at the market.

SWINDLER 2: Are we talented or what?

The two swindlers exit through curtain 2.

SHAHRAZAD: And so, those two swindlers went off believing they were just about the most clever men in the world.

DUNYAZAD: How did they get into the palace?

SHAHRAZAD: They were invited in, of course. But it wasn't their idea. The next day those two swindlers met their match.

SCENE 4

THE STORY OF THE THREE SWINDLERS

Enter all three swindlers, from curtain 2. Swindler 3 is showing swindler 1 how to do sleight of hand. He holds up a hand with a coin wedged in the palm.

SWINDLER 3: And then you go like this.

Swindler 3 then does the "pull the coin from behind the ear" trick on swindler 1.

SWINDLER 1: That's brilliant!

SWINDLER 3: You see, you can perform astounding feats of magic this way. People will believe what you

want them to believe.

SWINDLER 1: So you're nothing but a scammer?

SWINDLER 3: It's not my fault that most people are unobservant. Everything I do is right in front of their eyes. Well, comrades, I'm about ready upscale my swindling a bit. Would you care to join me?

SWINDLER 1: Where?

SWINDLER 3: Our new place of employment shall be none other than the sultan's royal palace.

SWINDLER 2: The sultan's palace? How are you going to get in? It's heavily guarded.

SWINDLER 3: I have a plan, but I need your help...

Swindler 3 puts his arms around the shoulders of the other swindlers and all three exit through curtain 2.

SHAHRAZAD: Several days later the three swindlers approached the palace gate.

Enter two guards, from curtain 2, who stand on either side of curtain 2. Curtain 2 will now represent the entrance to the palace. The swindlers now enter from curtain 1.

SWINDLER 3: I'd like to see the sultan.

GUARD 1: No one gets in to see the sultan without proper identification and a letter of introduction.

SWINDLER 3: Ah, I see. Well, that's unfortunate because I am the very best at what I do. No one in the world is as good as I am at what I do.

SWINDLER 1: That's not true! My uncle's cousin is twice as knowledgeable as you are. Now me, on the other hand, I truly am the best at what I do.

SWINDLER 2: I beg your pardon, but you are definitely not as knowledgeable as I am. Or as he is, for that matter. *(meaning swindler 3)*

SWINDLER 1: You don't even know my uncle's cousin. How can you judge?

SWINDLER 2: I know you—that's enough!

SWINDLER 3: Some friends the two of you turned out to be! Stop this right now.

SWINDLER 2: He started it. *(pointing to swindler 1)*

SWINDLER 1: No, he did. *(pointing to swindler 3)*

SWINDLER 3: Me? I certainly did not!

SWINDLER 1: You did too! *(gives swindler 3 a shove)*

SWINDLER 3: *(shoving back)* Stop this nonsense right now!

Then a scuffle ensues, with shouting and pushing.

GUARD 1: All of you, stop it! *(Both guards try to break up the fight.)*

VOICE OF SULTAN FROM BEHIND CURTAIN 2: What's all the noise out there?

GUARD 2: These three gentlemen claim to be experts at... at something or other, and they seem to be fighting about which of them is the best at what they do.

VOICE OF SULTAN: Bring them inside and let me talk to them.

GUARD 2: Yes, your Majesty. *(then to the swindlers)* Come on, you three. Straighten up now, and don't make fools of yourselves in front of the sultan.

The two guards take the three swindlers through curtain 2. As Shahrazad talks, the set is changed to be the throne room. Set the throne in the middle of the stage. Behind the throne, set a small table and on the table set a tray with several royal gifts of some kind, among them at least one large gemstone. The sultan enters from curtain 2 also, and sits on the throne, a vizier and an executioner stand on either side of him.

SHAHRAZAD: And so it was that the three swindlers achieved the first part of their plan. They had gained admittance to the sultan's palace. Now all they had to do was convince the sultan to employ them in his service.

SULTAN: Bring in the troublemakers!

The guards and the three swindlers enter from curtain 1.

SULTAN: Now then, let's hear what these gentlemen have to say. Who are you and why have you come to the palace?

SWINDLER 1: Your Highness, I am a gemstone expert. I can accurately determine the value of a gemstone to within 10 dinars. Since you undoubtedly have a vast treasury of gemstones, I came to offer you my services.

SULTAN: Well... I don't have any immediate need for your services, but I'll keep you in mind. What about you? *(looking at swindler 2)*

SWINDLER 2: Your majesty, I am an expert in the field of equine genealogy. I can determine just by observation the blood line of any horse.

SULTAN: That's interesting. I do buy horses quite frequently. I'll keep you in mind. *(to swindler 3)* And you?

SWINDLER 3: I am an expert in human genealogy, your majesty. I can determine the true parentage of any person.

SULTAN: I've never heard of such a thing.

SWINDLER 3: My skill is very rare indeed. As far as I know, I'm the only one in the world you can do this.

SULTAN: Well, you seem like three very interesting and *possibly* useful gentlemen, so I will assign to each of you a small room at the far end of the palace and a daily meal consisting of two loaves of bread and a bowl of soup. If I have need of you, I will call you. *(to the guards)* Show them to their quarters!

The guards take the swindlers to curtain 3, and they exit. The guards return to their posts, one on each side of the sultan, but at a distance from the vizier and the executioner. (Or, they can stand on the sides of curtain 2.)

SHAHRAZAD: Several days later, the sultan received a gift from a foreign dignitary.

The vizier brings out the tray from behind the throne.

SULTAN: *(picking up the clear gemstone)* Ah, what a beauty! This must be worth half a million dinars.

VIZIER: I believe you have a gemstone expert in the palace.

SULTAN: Eh?

VIZIER: Remember those strange fellows that you brought into the palace? I believe one of them said he was an expert in determining the value of gemstones.

SULTAN: Yes, I believe he did say that. Fetch him at once!

A guard goes over to curtain 3 and opens it. Swindler 1 comes out and stands before the sultan.

SULTAN: Well? Prove yourself. Tell me the value of this exquisite gemstone.

Swindler 1 takes the gem and examines it carefully. After some consideration, he makes his pronouncement.

SWINDLER 1: Your majesty, this gemstone is worthless.

SULTAN: Worthless? Are you crazy? It must be worth thousands of dinars!

SWINDLER 1: It has a worm in the center.

SULTAN: What? Who ever heard of a worm in a gemstone? You really are crazy! *(to the executioner)* Execute this man at once!

VIZIER: *(interceding)* Your majesty, there is a chance you could be executing an innocent man. Let us see if he can prove that what he said is true. If not, then you can execute him.

SULTAN: *(to the swindler)* All right. Show me the worm!

The swindler then takes a small hand drill out of his pocket and pretends to drill into the gemstone. He then tilts the stone as if letting something drop out of the hole. He then shows the sultan what fell out into his hand. (Pantomimed-- no need for a real worm.)

SULTAN: *(astonished)* A worm? But how could you have possibly known it was there? The stone is clear!

SWINDLER 1: I have very keen eyesight.

SULTAN: Guards, take this man back to his quarters. And... increase his daily food allowance from two loaves of bread to three loaves of bread.

A guard takes Swindler 1 back to curtain 1. Swindler 1 disappears behind curtain 1.

SHAHRAZAD: Not long after that, the sultan purchased a horse. It was a beautiful black stallion. The sultan became very fond of this horse and was considering using it as his personal mount. One day that second swindler came to mind-- the one that said he was an equine genealogist. The sultan had the horse brought into his courtyard for examination.

SULTAN: Bring to me the fellow who claimed he could determine the genealogy of a horse simply by looking at it. I want him to evaluate this horse and confirm its pedigree.

A guard goes to curtain 2, opens it, and brings swindler 2 before the king.

SULTAN: Examine this horse *(pointing out towards the audience, as if the horse is standing at the very front of the stage)* and tell me about the families of its father and mother.

The swindler approaches the invisible horse and pantomimes looking along its body and up and down its legs.

SWINDLER: This horse is well proportioned and shows fine breeding passed on to him by his father. It is truly an exquisite specimen and your majesty is to be congratulated on having such a beautiful specimen in his stables. However, I did notice one fault that he has inherited from his mother.

SULTAN: And what is that?

SWINDLER 2: From the shape of his hooves I can determine that his mother.. was a cow.

SULTAN: A cow? Are you crazy?! Who ever heard of a horse and a cow producing offspring?!

SWINDLER: *(Holds up one hand, palm toward audience, fingers together.)* Horses have hooves like this. *(Then he moves his fingers, making a V between the middle finger and ring finger.)* Cows have hooves like this. *(Then he narrows the V, making a compromise between horse and cow.)* This horse has a hooves like this. That can only mean one thing—that this horse must have a cow for a mother.

SULTAN: You're no equine genealogist. You're a fake. A cow for a mother! Impossible! Executioner, off with his head!

VIZIER: Your majesty, once again, I recommend that you not be too hasty. Why not send for the man who sold you the horse, and demand that he tell you everything he knows about its parents?

SULTAN: All right, but make it quick.

The guards exit through curtain 2 and immediately come back with the former owner of the horse.

SHAHRAZAD: So the man who sold the horse to the sultan was brought in for questioning.

The former owner stands next to the sultan and they both pretend to look at the horse.

SULTAN: On pain of death, I demand that you tell me the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, about the parentage of this stallion. This so-called "expert" here is telling me its mother was... a cow, if you can believe it.

FORMER OWNER: I must confess, your majesty, he is correct. The stallion's father got out of his pasture one day and wandered over to a nearby farm. Many months later, the farmer brought me a little black colt and swore to me that it had been born of his cow, with one of my stallions as the father.

SULTAN: How dare you sell me a half-horse-half-cow...thing! Get out of my presence immediately or I shall execute you!

The former owner turns and bolts out through curtain 2.

SULTAN: *(turning to the swindler)* As for you... guards, take him back to his quarters. *(pause)* And... increase his ration from two loaves of bread to three.

Guards take swindler out through curtain 3, then return to their posts.

SULTAN: *(muttering)* Who ever heard of such nonsense... a horse with a cow for a mother. Hmph... *(pause)* Vizier, what did that third fellow say his talent was?

VIZIER: I believe he said he was an expert in human genealogy.

SULTAN: Dare I try him as well?

VIZIER: As you wish, your majesty.

SULTAN: *(in a much quieter voice, as if talking to himself)* Maybe I'd better not. Things seem to go badly when these fellows show up. *(pause)* But if he's as accurate as the first two... *(pause)* No, I can't. *(pause)* *(addressing the vizier)* Ohhh... call in that third one!

VIZIER: As you wish. *(addressing the guards)* Fetch that third fellow!

Guards go to curtain 3 and come back with the third swindler.

SULTAN: Everyone leave me! I want to have a private conversation with this fellow.

All exit through curtain 2.

SULTAN: *(coming close to swindler 3 and talking confidentially)* Are you sure you can determine a person's parentage just by looking at him?

SWINDLER 3: *(leaning in to the sultan and almost whispering)* Yes. Most assuredly.

SULTAN: I've had problems with rumors circulating around the palace. If you could put them to rest for me, I'd be much obliged. Tell me... *(pause)* tell me... about my genealogy.

SWINDLER 3: I can do what you ask, your majesty, but first I need you to swear a solemn oath.

SULTAN: Saying what?

SWINDLER 3: Promising that you won't order my execution.

SULTAN: *(pauses and thinks about it)* All right... I promise.

SWINDLER 3: I will reveal to you your true genealogy...

SHAHRAZAD and SWINDLER 3: ...tomorrow night.

SHAH ZAMAN and SULTAN: Tomorrow night?

SHAHRAZAD and SWINDLER 3: Yes, tomorrow night.

The sultan and the swindler immediately disappear through curtain 2. The throne and any other set pieces are removed as quickly as possible.

SHAH ZAMAN: So this is the way it goes! You keep him in suspense from morning till night. You've got a clever head on your shoulders.

SHAHRIYAR: I take it you are no longer offended at my decision to forestall her demise?

SHAHRAZAD: Will you return tomorrow night to hear the verdict of the sultan's genealogy?

SHAH ZAMAN: *(trying to look disinterested)* Perhaps.

Shah Zaman casually exits stage left.

Shahrazad quickly escorts Dunyazad off stage right.

Shahriyar remains on stage and lies down on the bed. After a pause long enough to indicate the passing of the night, the blue lighting goes off, indicating it is now daytime.

SCENE 5

Vizier enters from stage left. He is holding a tea tray with several items on it, one of which is the very same gemstone that was in the story of the three swindlers.

Shahriyar sits up.

SHAHRIYAR: I know, I know. The itinerary for the day. *(rather dully)* What kind of boring nonsense will I be enforced to endure today?

VIZIER: This morning an expert jeweler will be doing an inventory of your gemstone collection.

SHAHRIYAR: *(suddenly more interested)* Really?

VIZIER: And... he has brought his piece to be added to the collection.

The vizier takes the gemstone off the tray and brings it over for Shahriyar's inspection.

SHAHRIYAR: What an incredible coincidence. *(He holds up the gemstone and looks at it.)*

VIZIER: A coincidence with what?

SHAHRIYAR: Never mind. It's nothing. And what about this afternoon?

VIZIER: The races, of course.

SHAHRIYAR: Horses...

VIZIER: Yes...

SHAHRIYAR: How does she do it? *(still looking at the gemstone)*

VIZIER: I beg your pardon?

SHAHRIYAR: *(abruptly changing his tone to be matter-of-fact)* I don't think I want to know the rest of the day. Just surprise me. *(getting up)* I'll take my tea on the balcony. Fetch Shah Zaman for me. He can accompany me to the treasury after our meal.

Shahriyar heads for exit at stage left. Vizier picks up the tray and follows him. They both exit.

The stage is empty just long enough to suggest the passage of some time.

Shahriyar and Shah Zaman enter from stage left.

SHAH ZAMAN: Another beautiful sunset tonight. Just as spectacular as last night's.

SHAHRIYAR: More importantly, will tonight's story be as spectacular as last night's?

SHAH ZAMAN: How long do we have to wait?

SHAHRIYAR: Not too long.

Shah Zaman hides himself, and just in time, as Dunyazad and Shahrazad enter from stage right. Shahrazad looks around as she comes into the room, surprised not to see Shah Zaman. But she makes no mention of it.

SHAHRIYAR: So the sultan promised not to execute the swindler no matter what he said.

Immediately, as quickly as possible, the throne is brought back out and the sultan sits on it, with the swindler beside him, posed just as they were at the end of scene 4.

SHAHRIYAR: And the swindler said to the sultan...

SHAHRAZAD and SWINDLER 3: Let me examine your face very carefully.

The swindler stares into the sultan's face. The sultan stays very still.

SWINDLER 3: Let me see your hands.

The sultan puts out his hands and the swindler examines them.

SWINDLER 3: And your feet.

The sultan takes off his shoes (socks can stay on) and the swindler examines them.

SWINDLER 3: Stand up.

The sultan stands up. The swindler looks at his posture and profile.

SWINDLER 3: I have made my determination. You'd better sit down.

Sultan sits down.

SWINDLER 3: Your mother was a gypsy and your father was a cook.

SULTAN: What?! Are you crazy?! I am the SULTAN! How dare you insult me like this! Vizier, bring my executioner!

The vizier, guards and executioner come back on stage. The guards stand one on either side of curtain 2. the vizier and the executioner stand next to the king, as they were in scene 4.

SULTAN: *(to vizier)* He just had the audacity to accuse me of being the offspring of a gypsy and a baker!
The guards might chuckle behind the sultan's back.

VIZIER: Well, that's very... creative.

SULTAN: I want his head taken off immediately!

VIZIER: Your majesty, would it not be best if you first brought in your royal mother to testify to the truth, in front of his young scoundrel, so that he might be proven wrong before he dies? Then he can die in shame.

SULTAN: I hate to delay executions... but all right. Guards, send for the queen mother!

The guards disappear behind curtain 2 and immediately come back with the queen mother. She comes and stands before sultan.

SULTAN: Dearest mother, I bind you by a royal oath to tell this man the truth about my genealogy.

QUEEN MOTHER: The truth?

SULTAN: Yes, of course, the truth. To contrast with the ridiculous accusations this young scoundrel has pronounced on me. Some nonsense about a gypsy and a baker.

QUEEN MOTHER: *(gasps out loud)* No! It's impossible! After all these years—how could anyone find out? This young man speaks the truth. My mother was my father's first wife and she was indeed a Gypsy. My father had rescued her from terrible circumstances. But she died when I was very young, and after that my father married a rich widow who raised me along with her own children. They gave me the very best education and made me a suitable bride for a sultan. I was brought to your father's palace on my twentieth birthday.

SULTAN: And the part about my father being a baker?

QUEEN MOTHER: It's a very long story. Are you sure you want me to tell it?

SULTAN: No, I've heard enough. Leave my presence.

The guards escort the queen mother back out through curtain 2. She holds her head down all the way.

SULTAN: Leave me alone with this fellow!

The guards, vizier, and executioner exit through curtain 2.

SULTAN: How? How did you have known all this? Explain yourself!

SWINDLER 3: You have your mother's complexion. I spent several years living with a band of Gypsies and I recognize the shape and color of the eyebrows.

SULTAN: And my father?

SWINDLER 3: I knew you had to be the son of a cook, not a king. When you rewarded my two friends you did so with extra bread. True sultans give gold and silver. Only a baker would give an extra loaf of bread.

SULTAN: *(takes off his crown [or decorative turban])* I don't deserve to wear this. *(pause)* Here! *(He hands the crown to the swindler.)* You take it. You are a wise man. You'll make a great sultan.

The sultan then takes off his royal robe and hands it to the swindler.

SULTAN: Well, I'm off. Good luck.

The sultan exits through curtain 2.

The swindler is left holding the crown and robe. He doesn't know what to do at first. Then he slowly puts on the robe and tries on the crown [or turban].

DUNYAZAD: The swindler became a sultan?

SHAHRAZAD: The swindler lived out the rest of his days as the sultan, with his two friends as his viziers. He turned out to be a very good sultan. The people loved him and he ruled wisely.

Swindler 3 exits and the throne is taken off stage.

SCENE 6

Shah Zaman comes out of hiding.

SHAH ZAMAN: That wasn't a funny ending.

SHAHRAZAD: No, not really, but was it satisfying?

DUNYAZAD: I think the sultan deserved to be replaced. All he wanted to do was execute people. It's a good thing that his vizier was there to stop him.

SHAHRIYAR: But did he deserve to be replaced with a swindler?

DUNYAZAD: At least the swindler never killed anyone. Maybe he wasn't so bad. Maybe it was like he said—he was just a little more observant than anyone else. That's not a bad thing.

DUNYAZAD: So that's the end of his story?

SHAHRAZAD: No, not at all. He married a princess from India and they had a daughter who was so lovely

that the sultan feared that even a glimpse of her face would cause the men of his kingdom to fall madly in love with her.

DUNYAZAD: Was he right?

SHAHRAZAD: Perhaps. I don't know. But I do know that he ordered that she be kept under a veil at all times. And when she went out in her carriage the heralds ordered everyone to clear the streets. So no one ever saw the princess. Until one day... oh-- but I must start at the beginning of the story, not in the middle! I must tell you about Aladdin.

ALADDIN

SHAHRAZAD: Aladdin lived alone with his mother. His father, Mustafa the tailor, had died when Aladdin was very young. Without her husband, Aladdin's mother struggled to pay the rent and feed just the two of them.

One day an African magician came into town. He stayed at various inns and talked with various merchants, and, most curiously, spent a great deal of time watching children. One day he approached Aladdin.

MAGICIAN: My son, come here!

ALADDIN: Who, me?

MAGICIAN: Yes, you. Come here.

Aladdin slowly approaches magician.

MAGICIAN: Let me look at you. *(Stares at his face.)* Look at your face—you must be!

ALADDIN: I must be what?

MAGICIAN: The resemblance is amazing. You must be the son of my brother, Mustafa. Is your father's name Mustafa?

ALADDIN: Yes, but he's been dead a long time now.

MAGICIAN: Dead? My brother is dead? And I had so hoped to see him again!

ALADDIN: My father never mentioned anything about having a brother. Are you sure I'm who you think I am?

MAGICIAN: Oh yes, I am very sure. You see he probably never mentioned me because I have been away, out of the country for thirty years. That's almost as good as being dead, don't you think?

ALADDIN: Um, yeah. That's a long time!

MAGICIAN: Son, what's your name?

ALADDIN: Aladdin.

MAGICIAN: Aladdin, go and find your mother and tell her that I would like to come and see her, as she is my dear sister-in-law. But first, *(he takes a few gold coins out of his bag)* take this and go to the market to buy some food for her. I don't want to impose on her hospitality. And make sure you get some fruit for dessert.

ALADDIN: Yes, of course. I'll go at once.

Aladdin exits through curtain 1. Magician exits through curtain 3.

Stage crew immediately brings out, from curtain 2, the furnishing of Aladdin's house: two chairs facing each other, with a small table between them, and behind the table (facing the audience) a two-seat bench.

Aladdin's mother enters along with the stage crew and sits on one of the chairs or benches, and takes up some mending.

Aladdin enters from curtain 1 with a basket of food he bought at the market.

ALADDIN: Mother! Mother! My uncle is coming to visit!

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Your uncle? Aladdin, you don't have any uncles.

ALADDIN: Yes, I do. I met him today. My father's brother.

ALADDIN MOTHER: But your father had no brother.

ALADDIN: Are you sure? Perhaps he just never talked about him.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: I'm sure your father never had a brother.

ALADDIN: But my uncle recognized me. He looked at my face and said truly I was the son of Mustafa the tailor. Then he gave me money and told me to buy food. *(He holds out the basket.)* He said he would be coming to visit very soon.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Well, then, help me get this food set out properly. *(They begin setting out the food onto the table. You might want to have some small plates tucked into the basket along with the food.)*

MAGICIAN'S VOICE *(from behind curtain 1)*: Aladdin? Aladdin?

ALADDIN: Uncle! *(He goes over and opens curtain 1 as if it is the front door.)*

The magician enters slowly and dramatically, looking around.

MAGICIAN: So this is where my dear brother lived out the end of his life. This dear little house. And where did my brother sit? Which was his favorite chair?

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: *(Going over and patting the seat of one of the chairs.)* This one right here. Please, sir, come and sit here.

MAGICIAN: No, not in my brother's chair, no. I'll sit here *(he sits in chair opposite brother's chair)* and imagine that my dear brother is sitting in his chair. *(Gesturing to Aladdin and his mother:)* Please, sit with us and we can be together as a family.

Aladdin and his mother slowly sit down on the two-person bench behind the table.

MAGICIAN: *(indicating the food)* Please, eat. We can feast while we talk about family matters. *They all reach for something on the table.*

MAGICIAN: So, tell me, dearest sister, to what trade has my nephew been apprenticed? *There is an awkward silence. Aladdin lowers his head.*

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Sir, I am ashamed to say it, but my son is an idle lad. His father did his best to interest him in his tailor's trade, but to no avail. And since then, despite all my efforts, the only trade Aladdin has shown any interest in is being a vagabond. He spends all his time playing with children and I despair that he will ever make anything of himself. *(You may want to have her start to cry into a handkerchief at this point.)*

MAGICIAN: Nephew, this is not good. You are on the verge of manhood. It's high time you choose a trade for yourself. You need to support not only yourself, but your mother, as well. If you don't want to be a tailor, perhaps you'd prefer being a baker?

Aladdin slowly shakes his head.

MAGICIAN: A butcher? *(Aladdin shakes his head at each of these next suggestions.)* A weaver? A basket maker? A rope maker? A cobbler? A glass blower? A blacksmith? A gold smith? A fisherman? A soldier? What about being a merchant? You don't have to make anything. You simply sell things that other people make. If being a merchant appeals to you, I can help you to set up your own shop.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: But that would take a considerable sum of money.

MAGICIAN: It would be the least I could do to honor the memory of my dear departed brother. Aladdin, would you like to be a merchant?

ALADDIN: I... I guess so.

MAGICIAN: I will dress you in fine clothes and introduce you to the most important citizens of the city.

ALADDIN: Well... yes, that sounds good.

MAGICIAN: Well, then, it's settled. *(He stands up.)* Shall we go into town and find you a splendid suit of clothes?

ALADDIN: Right now?

MAGICIAN: *(Points to the empty chair.)* With your father's permission.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Oh, he gives you his permission. I can assure you of that.

MAGICIAN: Well, then, let's be off.

The magician walks toward curtain 1. Aladdin follows.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Thank you, sir—I mean.. brother. Your generosity is overwhelming.

MAGICIAN: *(in a sly voice)* Don't worry, it will all be worth it.

Magician and Aladdin exit through curtain 1. Then Aladdin's mother exits through curtain 2 when stage crew comes out and removes the house furnishings.

SCENE 7

After the furnishings are gone, the magician enters from curtain 3, followed by Aladdin. They walk in a loop, out towards the front of the stage area, then toward curtain 1.

ALADDIN: When are we going to stop for new clothes? There was a very nice tailor's shop back there.

MAGICIAN: Be patient. Keep walking.

They disappear through curtain 1. They go around behind the curtains and re-appear through curtain 3.

ALADDIN: What about that shop back there? They had beautiful vests for sale. I really liked the red ones.

MAGICIAN: I have something better in mind. Keep following me.

They again disappear through curtain 1 and then re-appear through curtain 3.

ALADDIN: Where are we going? We headed for the edge of town. I don't think I've ever been in this neighborhood before.

MAGICIAN: Just keep walking. We are going to a very special place. A place where you can get anything you want.

They again disappear through curtain 1 and reappear through curtain 3.

ALADDIN: Uncle, are you sure you know where you are going? We're outside the city now. There's nothing ahead but mountains.

MAGICIAN: Let me check my map. *(He pulls out a crumpled piece of parchment and looks at it.)* Yes, we are headed directly for it.

ALADDIN: For what?

MAGICIAN: You'll see when we get there. Come along!

They disappear through curtain 1 and then re-appear through curtain 3.

ALADDIN: *(obviously tired)* Are we there yet?

MAGICIAN: We've gone too far to turn back now. We're almost there!

They disappear one last time through curtain 1 and then re-appear through curtain 3. After this, the set crew should immediately get the large rock in place (the one behind which the genie hid in The Fisherman and the Genie) right behind curtain 2.

MAGICIAN: Now... let me see. *(He again pulls out his crumpled parchment map.)* Yes, it should be right here somewhere.

ALADDIN: But there's nothing here. Where are we going anyway? I thought we were going to buy clothes!

MAGICIAN: Shush! We are on the brink of a great discovery. A discovery that can make you rich beyond your wildest dreams!

Aladdin looks around at the bleak surroundings and scratches his head and/or shrugs.

MAGICIAN: Mama duniani, wazi! Yatangaza mali yako. Msiharibu anakuja kukopa. Mimi kusema wazi! *(This is what came out of an online translator as Swahili for, "Mother earth, open! Reveal your riches. Do not harm the one who comes to borrow. I say open!" You may have the magician speak English, if you wish.)*
Curtain 2 opens (with or without sounds effects) just enough to reveal the rock.

MAGICIAN: Yes, there it is! Beyond that rock lies a chasm that leads to a secret chamber deep in the earth. And in that chamber there is enough treasure to make both you and I richer than all the kings of the earth!

ALADDIN: Well, then, let's go!

MAGICIAN: There's only one catch. I can't go down there.

ALADDIN: Why not?

MAGICIAN: The rules of this magic. The doors of the chamber will only open for someone whose father's name is Mustafa, whose grandfather's name is Yosef and whose great-grandfather's name is Abdullah.

ALADDIN: But those are the names of my father and grandfathers!

MAGICIAN: Precisely. You see, you are special, Aladdin. This treasure is your destiny.

ALADDIN: But I'm nothing special. I'm just "me."

MAGICIAN: Let's not get philosophical about his. Here are your instructions. Go over that rock and down into the chasm. At the bottom you will find a door. Go through that door and it will lead you into three rooms that are filled with bronze jars containing gold and silver pieces. Take great care not to touch them.

ALADDIN: What happens if I touch them?

MAGICIAN: You die instantly.

ALADDIN: Oh.

MAGICIAN: At the end of the third room there is a gate that leads to a garden. Go into the garden. At the far end of the garden you will see a pedestal. On top of that pedestal is a lamp. Bring me that lamp.

ALADDIN: I won't die if I touch the lamp?

MAGICIAN: No, of course not.

ALADDIN: What about all the riches beyond our wildest dreams?

MAGICIAN: On the way back out, look carefully at the fruit hanging on the trees in the garden. You may bring back as many of those fruits as you can carry.

ALADDIN: Fruit can make me rich?

MAGICIAN: These fruits can. And also, you may take coins on your way out. As long as you are holding the lamp while you are taking them, the coins can't hurt you.

ALADDIN: On the way out I can take coins?

MAGICIAN: Right. Now get going!!

Aladdin climbs over the stone/box and crouches down on the other side and slides off to one side so he cannot be seen by the audience. The magician begins pacing back and forth. Then he goes over and leans over the rocks and calls down to Aladdin.

MAGICIAN: Have you found the first room?

ALADDIN'S VOICE: Yes, uncle. *(If you have an "echo tube" have Aladdin speak into it off stage, to make his voice sound like it is coming from a cave.)*

Magician paces some more.

MAGICIAN: Have you found the garden?

ALADDIN: *(more quietly, as if farther away)* Yes, uncle.

Magician goes back to pacing.

MAGICIAN: Have you found the lamp?

Silence.

MAGICIAN: Have you found the lamp?

Again, silence.

MAGICIAN: He's probably too far back in the cave to hear me. I'll just have to wait.

He goes back to pacing.

Suddenly Aladdin's voice (still with echo tube, if you have one) is heard just beyond the rock.

ALADDIN: Uncle, I have the lamp.

MAGICIAN: Great! Toss it up here!

ALADDIN: I have it strapped to my side. How about if you just give me a hand and get me out of here?

MAGICIAN: How about if you unstrap the lamp from your side and toss it up to me?

ALADDIN: How about getting me out of here?

MAGICIAN: Toss me the lamp first, and then I'll get you out.

ALADDIN: Uncle! You seem more concerned about this lamp than you do about me!

MAGICIAN: Just shut up and give me the lamp!

ALADDIN: No! You get me out of here first.

MAGICIAN: No, you give me the lamp first!

ALADDIN: I'm not giving you the lamp until you get me out of here.

MAGICIAN: Stop being so stubborn you rotten little urchin!

ALADDIN: Uncle! How dare you call me a rotten little urchin?

MAGICIAN: How about you stop sniveling and give me the lamp?

ALADDIN: Only if you pull me up first.

MAGICIAN: GIVE ME THE LAMP!

ALADDIN: PULL ME UP!

MAGICIAN: You little scoundrel! You can just die a miserable death down there. *(magic words and the curtain closes)* I'm going back to Africa!

The magician stomps off, through curtain 1.

ALADDIN: *(still out of sight and just a voice from the cavern)* Uncle! Uncle! Don't leave me here. How could an uncle be so cruel to his... *(pause)* Oh...I get it now. He's no more my uncle that the sultan is. Boy, do I feel stupid. *(pause)* But why did he want this boring old lamp, anyway. It's nothing special. It's just an old lamp. It's not even that shiny. Although underneath, the brass might still be in good condition. Perhaps it just needs some buffing, like this.

Suddenly, curtain 2 parts fully and there is a genie sitting or standing on the stone/box. You may accompany his appearance with a puff of smoke if you have a smoke machine.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: You called, master?

ALADDIN: Where did you come from?!

GENIE OF THE LAMP: From inside the lamp. I am the genie of the lamp.

ALADDIN: I didn't call you.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Did you rub the lamp?

ALADDIN: Yes...`

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Well then, you called me. What can I do for you?

ALADDIN: How about getting me out of here?

GENIE OF THE LAMP: As you wish, master.

The genie reaches down and pulls Aladdin up. They step off the box onto the stage. Then curtain 2 closes.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Is that all?

ALADDIN: Well, I'm kind of lost. Do you think you could show me the way home?

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Certainly, it's right this way.

Aladdin follows the genie out through curtain 3.

As soon as they have disappeared through curtain 3, the set crew should quickly bring out the settings for Aladdin's house (from curtain 2).

SCENE 8

Aladdin's mother enters and sits down. Aladdin soon comes bursting through curtain 1.

ALADDIN: Mother! You'll never believe what's happened to me.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: *(rushing over to him and giving him a hug)* I've been so worried about you! Where have you been? I expected you back hours ago!

ALADDIN: Well, first of all, I have to tell you that our dear "uncle" is nothing but a rascal! He's no uncle of mine! He left me in the bottom of a cave knowing full well I'd die there!

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: What? What do you mean? You went to buy clothes!

ALADDIN: He took me way out in the country to a magical place with a cavern full of treasure! And he told me to retrieve this lamp for him. *(He unstraps the lamp and shows it to his mother.)* He tricked me into going down and getting it for him. When I wouldn't give it to him, he left me there, trapped in the cavern!

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: How did you get out?

ALADDIN: You may not believe this part of the story.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Just tell the truth, Aladdin.

ALADDIN: Well, I started rubbing this lamp just to clean it a bit *(Aladdin begins to rub the lamp)* and then... *The genie comes out through curtain 2, with a puff of smoke if you can manage it.)*

GENIE OF THE LAMP: You called, master?

Aladdin's mother is terrified and hides in front of the couch.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Aladdin, make that horrible thing go away!

ALADDIN: Mother, it won't hurt you. It saved my life.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: What can I do for you, master?

ALADDIN: Well, actually, I am a bit hungry. Can you bring me something to eat?

The genie disappears through curtain 2 and is instantly back with a huge tray of food.

ALADDIN: Wow! How did you do that?

GENIE OF THE LAMP: I can grant any wish.

Aladdin's mother peeks over the couch, but stays hidden.

ALADDIN: Well, for right now, I think you are scaring my mother. How about if I wish you back to the magical place you came from?

GENIE OF THE LAMP: I obey, master.

The genie disappears behind curtain 2.

ALADDIN: It's okay, mother. It's gone now. Come and eat.

Aladdin's mother gradually comes out of hiding and Aladdin sits the giant tray of food on the table in front of his mother.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: So where did this come from?

ALADDIN: The genie brought it.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Is it real? Won't it disappear as soon as you take a bite?

ALADDIN: Let's find out. *(He picks up a piece of food and (pretends) to take a bite.)* Nope. Seems real to me. Oh—I almost forgot. I brought something back for you. Something I found in that cave.

Aladdin opens the bag that is strapped around his waist and pulls out some gem stones.

ALADDIN: I picked these fruits off the trees in the underground garden. But they're not like any other fruits I've ever seen. *(He tries to bite one.)* They're really hard!

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: These aren't fruits, Aladdin. They're gemstones. They might be worth a lot of money.

ALADDIN: Oh, and speaking of money, I found these as well. *(He pulls out handfuls of gold coins.)*

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Aladdin! That was some cave you found! Do you think you could find your way back?

ALADDIN: The cave only opens by saying a magic spell and I wasn't paying attention when my uncle—I mean the magician—was saying it. There's no way to get in if you don't know the magic words.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER; But maybe that... that genie thing could open it?

ALADDIN: Mother, we don't need the cave. The genie himself can bring us whatever we need.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Well, I guess so. But I don't like him. He scares me. Don't rub the lamp when I'm

around, okay?

ALADDIN: Okay.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Let's find a good hiding place for all these coins and stones, so on one finds out about them.

ALADDIN: *(As he puts the gems and coins back into his bags.)* Good idea.
They exit through curtain 2.

SCENE 9

During the following conversation, Aladdin and his mother must change into nicer clothes. A full change is not necessary. Just one or two extra pieces, like a vest for some jewelry, will do. A few fancy furnishings could also be added to the house set during this time.

DUNYAZAD: So did Aladdin ask the genie to bring him treasure chests filled with gold?

SHAHRAZAD: No, actually he didn't. Aladdin only called the genie whenever he and his mother ran out of food. He would tell the genie he was hungry, then the genie would bring him food, served on a gold platter. After the food was gone, Aladdin would sell the gold platter and he and his mother would live on that money until it ran out. They only asked for what they really needed.

DUNYAZAD: Did he ever get new clothes?

SHAHRAZAD: Yes, he did use some of the money to buy new clothes. He also bought his mother a few things, as well.

SHAH ZAMAN: Is that the end of the story?

SHAHRIYAR: Of course not! The magician is still out there somewhere in Africa.

SHAH ZAMAN: Wait till he finds out Aladdin has the lamp! He'll want revenge.

DUNYAZAD: So did the lamp make Aladdin even lazier than before?

SHAHRAZAD: Surprisingly, Aladdin learned his lesson. He decided he wanted to make something of himself. He made friends with the goldsmith to whom he sold the gold trays, and the goldsmith introduced Aladdin to the merchants and important citizens of the city. He learned how to act and speak like a high-born gentleman.

DUNYAZAD: And then what?

SHAHRAZAD: Well... one day something happened that changed Aladdin's life forever...

Aladdin's mother enters from curtain 2 and seats herself. Then Aladdin enters. He looks stunned. He sits down.

ALADDIN: Mother...

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Aladdin, what wrong? Are you sick?

ALADDIN: I don't know. I feel very strange all over. I've never felt like this before.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: *(very concerned and leaning over to feel his forehead or show some other motherly act of concern)* You don't have a fever... When did this start?

ALADDIN: When I saw her.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Saw whom?

ALADDIN: The princess.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: You saw the princess? But that's impossible. It's against the law. No one is allowed to see the princess.

ALADDIN: I saw her, mother.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: How in the world did you do that?

ALADDIN: *(Aladdin may want to stand up and act this out as he narrates.)* Her royal carriage brought her to the public bath. The heralds called out to everyone to clear the streets and go inside buildings so no one would see the princess as she stepped out of the carriage and went into the bath. But I saw an open door in a building. So I went and hid behind it. I put my eye to the crack near the hinge, and through that crack I had a clear view of the princess for at least... 10 seconds!

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: What does she look like?

ALADDIN: She has sparkling eyes, a gentle face, and ruby lips. *(slight pause)* Mother...

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Yes?

ALADDIN: I need you to do something for me.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Yes?

ALADDIN: You must go to the sultan and ask him to allow me to marry her.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Aladdin! How dare you even think such a thing! You are forgetting who you are and where you came from. A sultan would never allow his daughter to marry the son of a tailor!

ALADDIN: But mother, I've made up my mind. I must marry her.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: No one can approach the sultan even for a trivial reason without bringing a gift. I can't imagine what kind of gift one must have to bring with a marriage proposal!

ALADDIN: But I do have a gift, mother. Remember those gemstones I brought back from the cave? I have seen many gemstones bought and sold at the goldsmith's shop. Even the smallest gems sell for a great amount of money. Gems such as mine are worth a large fortune. Even a sultan would be impressed by such a gift. Please, you must at least try, mother. My heart is set on it. I must marry the princess.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Aladdin, I probably won't even get past the front gate.

ALADDIN: Please, mother, just try.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: The sultan will think I am a crazy woman. He'll probably laugh at me.

ALADDIN: So? At least you will have tried.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: *(sighs)* All right, Aladdin. But you can't blame me if he says "No."

ALADDIN: I won't blame you, mother. I'll be grateful to you for trying. Now let's get those gems ready.

Aladdin and his mother exit through curtain 2. The set crew removes the house furnishings and brings out the furnishings for the sultan's chamber (a throne is necessary, other pieces may be added).

SCENE 10

The sultan, his vizier, the vizier's son, and possibly other non-speaking members of the court, enter through curtain 2. The sultan sits on the throne. The vizier stands next to the sultan and the vizier's son stands next to the vizier. Any other attendants stand on the other side of the sultan.

SULTAN: Who is our next supplicant?

VIZIER: A widow who comes to seek your highness' favor.

SULTAN: For what? What does she want?

VIZIER: That is unknown, sire. She would not tell us her request. She said it was a "sensitive matter."

SULTAN: Sensitive, eh? Hmm... Well, bring her in.

Either the vizier or an attendant does to curtain 1 and opens it to allow Aladdin's mother to enter. She is holding the gemstones which are in a bowl that is covered with a cloth.

VIZIER: You may approach the sultan now.

Aladdin's mother bows before the sultan.

SULTAN: Good woman, what brings you here?

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Your majesty, before I reveal to you the most extraordinary and unbelievable business that brings me here, I beg of you to pardon my audacity, my impudence. For my request is so unusual that I tremble and feel great shame.

SULTAN: Yes? What is your request?

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: I beg your highness's pardon ahead of time and entreat you to have mercy on me and spare me the punishment I should receive for my outrageous request.

SULTAN: Dear woman, I am at a loss to think what you could possibly ask of me to make me so indignant. Please feel free to speak. I will not be angry.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: I come on behalf of my son, Aladdin.

SULTAN: Yes?

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: It seems that... that... please forgive my forwardness, your majesty.

SULTAN: Please, just tell me your request.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Your majesty, my son has sent me... sent me to... to ask permission for him to marry your daughter.

The vizier and attendants may smirk or try not to laugh but the Sultan does not react at all.

SULTAN: I see. And is this relevant in any way to what is in the bowl you have brought?

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Oh, yes. This is a gift from my son. A gift for your daughter.

Aladdin's mother pulls away the folds of cloth to reveal the gems. All the member of the court begin to state. The sultan can hardly believe his eyes. He slowly reaches out his hand and picks one up and examines it.

SULTAN: Unbelievable! This is amazing!

He hands that one to his vizier and picks up another one.

SULTAN: Vizier, what do you make of these?

VIZIER: They appear to be genuine. They are nothing short of spectacular.

SULTAN: Do any other sultans have gems as fantastic as these?

VIZIER: Not that I know of.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: So you approve of my son's gift?

SULTAN: I've never received a gift as spectacular as this.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Will it be acceptable as an engagement gift?

SULTAN: Vizier, is this not an appropriate engagement gift?

VIZIER: Your highness, I was under the impression that you intended to give your daughter to my oldest son. Don't you remember our conversations last week?

SULTAN: But that was before this splendid gift arrived.

The sultan is still mesmerized by the jewels and can't take his eyes off them.

VIZIER: Your highness, please give my son three weeks to find an engagement gift as suitable, or more suitable, than this one.

SULTAN: Hmm... I'm not sure. I doubt you can top this one. Dear woman, tell your son to come back in three weeks. There are many preparations that need to be made.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Your majesty is most gracious. I shall go and give this good news to my son.

She bows and then exits through curtain 1.

VIZIER: Your majesty, how can you do this thing? How can you give your daughter to an unknown stranger who just happens to have a few nice gems?

SULTAN: A few nice gems? These are worth a fortune! Come, let's take them to the royal treasury.

All the member of the court exit through curtain 2, then the set crew removes the furnishings.

SCENE 11

SHAHRAZAD: And so Aladdin's mother went home and told Aladdin that the sultan had agreed to the marriage proposal. The next three weeks seemed to Aladdin like the longest weeks of his life. He thought about the princess every day and dreamed about her every night. He lived in his own happy dream world, oblivious of anything going on around him. Then, at the end of the three weeks, something totally unexpected happened.

Townspople begin coming out through curtain 1 and heading toward curtain 3, and then exiting through curtain 3. Use as many townspeople as you can muster. Most won't speak, but a few have lines. As they start going by, Aladdin comes out of curtain 2 and stands there watching them.

TOWNSPERSON 1: *(to townspeople 2)* Do you remember the last royal wedding?

TOWNSPERSON 2: I'll never forget how beautiful the streets looked. I wish the streets could look that nice every day!

They have moved on, towards curtain 3. The next set of speaking townspeople come to center stage.

CHILD: Mother, will we get to see the princess?

MOTHER: I don't think so, dear. I think we'll be too far away.

CHILD: Is she beautiful?

MOTHER: I don't know. The sultan won't allow anyone to see her.

CHILD: I think she must be beautiful.

MOTHER: Why?

CHILD: Because she's a princess, of course!

They move on and exit through curtain 3.

Aladdin is listening to what people say and he stops townspeople 3 to ask a question.

ALADDIN: Excuse me, can you tell me where all of you are going?

TOWNSPERSON 3: To the royal wedding, where else?

ALADDIN: Yes, of course. The princess is marrying...

TOWNSPERSON 3: The vizier's son, of course. Where have you been? Everyone has been talking about it for days!

Townsperson 3 moves on and exits through curtain 3. Other townspeople follow along behind and also disappear through curtain 3. When all have disappeared, Aladdin stands there alone, arms folded.

ALADDIN: Mother!!

Aladdin's mother instantly appears from behind curtain 2.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Yes, what is it?

ALADDIN: The sultan has broken his promise to us. I was just informed that the princess is to be married to the vizier's son this very day.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: What are you going to do about it?

ALADDIN: I'm not sure, but I can tell you one thing—the Princess will not be marrying the vizier's son today!

Aladdin exits through curtain 2. Aladdin's mother follows him.

SHAHRAZAD: So what do you think Aladdin did next?

DUNYAZAD: Maybe he rubbed the lamp and called the genie to help him.

SHAHRAZAD: That's exactly what he did. When the genie appeared, Aladdin told him to go and fetch the bride and groom from the royal wedding. In a flash, the genie was back, carrying the vizier's son under one arm and the princess under the other. The vizier's son was kicking and screaming. Aladdin immediately rescued the princess from the genie's grasp but left the vizier's son firmly in the genie's grip.

DUNYAZAD: What did the genie do with him?

SHAHRAZAD: Aladdin told the genie to take the vizier's son to... *(pause)*... where should he take him?

DUNYAZAD: To the dungeon!

SHAHRAZAD: But he hasn't committed any crime.

DUNYAZAD: To.... to....

SHAH ZAMAN: To the outhouse!

Dunyazad laughs.

SHAHRAZAD: So the genie locked the vizier's son in the outhouse, and there he spent a most miserable night. Meanwhile, Aladdin gave the princess his own bed and stood guard at the door all night so she would not be disturbed. In the morning, Aladdin told the genie to take them both back to the palace again.

DUNYAZAD: Then what happened?

SHAHRAZAD: The vizier's son was so terrified by what had happened that he went to the sultan the next day and told him to cancel the marriage. He said the princess must be under some sort of a magical spell and he wanted no part of it.

DUNYAZAD: So now Aladdin can marry the princess?

SHAHRAZAD: So it seems. But Aladdin planned his next move very carefully, with some help from the genie.

Enter Aladdin from curtain 2, followed by genie.

ALADDIN: So genie, I must make a spectacular entrance into the palace. The sultan must think I am a prince of immense wealth and great importance. I need many richly dressed servants to enter ahead of me.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Simply ask, and your wish shall be granted.

ALADDIN: Could you give me twenty servants?

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Certainly.

ALADDIN: What about forty?

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Certainly.

ALADDIN: Okay, give me forty servants, each richly dressed, and each of them carrying a gift for the sultan. But make sure the gifts are covered until they reach the sultan. I don't want the people in the streets gawking at my gifts.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Yes, master. Anything else?

ALADDIN: Well, I'll be needing some fancy clothes. And how about some new clothes for my mother, too. I want her to accompany me. Oh—and bring me some more of those nice gemstones from that underground treasure garden. I'll have my mother bring another dish of those to the sultan.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Yes, master. I shall do all that you say.

ALADDIN: And one more thing. I'll be needing a palace, too. Make the palace just a little bit larger than the sultan's and slightly nicer-looking. Put in more windows and trim it with gold.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Yes, master.

ALADDIN: And place it so that the sultan will be able to see it on the horizon when he looks out from his balcony.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: As you wish, master.

ALADDIN: Okay, begin! *(Makes gesture with his arms as if to "shoo" the genie away.)*

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Yes, master. At once. *(Turns to go, then turns around suddenly.)* Oh—one more thing.

ALADDIN: Yes, mast— I mean, yes?

GENIE OF THE LAMP: I might be gone longer than usual. These are some pretty big wishes! If you should need something while I am away, you can use this. (*He gives Aladdin a ring.*) This ring is good for just one wish. Rub the ring and your wish will come true. But remember, just one wish!

ALADDIN: Thank you, genie. I hope I won't need it.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Yes, master.

Genie exits through curtain 2.

ALADDIN: Well... I guess I'd better go and get into my new clothes!

Aladdin exits through curtain 2.

SHAHRAZAD: The genie did all that Aladdin asked, and soon Aladdin's new servants began marching toward the palace.

SCENE 12

A group of townspeople enter quickly through any of the curtains, to watch the servants going to the palace. As soon as the townspeople are in place, servants start coming through curtain 1 then walking across the stage and exiting through curtain 3. Each is carrying some kind of basket or box. If a basket, then it should be covered with a fancy cloth of some kind. This scene can be done with as few as six servants. When each servant disappears behind curtain 3, they quickly go around and get ready to reappeared through curtain 1 again. Thus, you can have a continuous stream of servants, to simulate the procession of 40 servants. You only need to have about three rotations of the servants, not the full 40.

These comments can be added at various points in the procession. The lines can be assigned at director's discretion. Additional comments can be added.

1: Where are all these servants headed?

2: They are going in the direction of the palace.

3: They look like they are bringing gifts of some kind.

4: Whose servants are they?

5: I don't know. They must have come from another country.

6: How many are there? Have you been counting?

7: No. But I think I've seen at least 40 or 50 by now.

8: Maybe their master is at the end of the line.

9: Yes, if we keep watching we'll get to see him.

10: Why don't we ask one of them?

11: (to one of the servants who is passing) Excuse me-- who is your master?

SERVANT: Prince Aladdin. He is coming. (*then the servant keeps on walking*)

12: Prince Aladdin? Have you ever heard of him?

13: No. I've never heard that name.

14: Let's keep watching.

OPTIONAL: In some versions, the servants toss gold coins to the crowd to earn their favor. (Just one servant could be chosen to do this, and on only trip across the stage.)

Eventually, the servants exit and stop coming through again. After a suspenseful moment of anticipation, Aladdin's mother appears through curtain 1, followed by Aladdin. Aladdin's mother can be carrying the same bowl she carried before. They progress across the stage and exit through curtain 3. The townspeople are in awe. After they exit through curtain 3, one townspeople says:

TOWNSPERSON: Hey, let's follow them to the palace!

The townspeople all get in a line and exit through curtain 3.

The set crew should immediately bring out the furnishings for the sultan's chamber.

SHAHRAZAD: The sultan could hardly believe his eyes when he saw Aladdin's servants come through the gates. He hadn't been expecting a visit from any foreign dignitary. By the time the 40th servant had come through the gates, the sultan was almost dying of curiosity. Who could possibly be coming?

SCENE 13

Enter the sultan, followed by his court, including the princess this time. The sultan talks as he enters.

SULTAN: Who could possibly be coming? Who? Who?

VIZIER: I do not know, your majesty.

SULTAN: It must be someone extremely rich, to have this many servants!

VIZIER: Yes, your majesty.

SULTAN: How is it possible that I was not notified about this occasion?

VIZIER: I am at a loss to explain it, your majesty.

SULTAN: Who is coming? Who?

VIZIER: We shall soon find out.

HERALD: Your majesty, Prince Aladdin has arrived. He requests an audience.

VIZIER: Allow him to enter.

First, the servants with gifts enter. They set their gifts in front of the sultan, then go and stand behind or to the side of the members of the court.

Then Aladdin's mother enters. She bows and sets her bowl before the sultan.

SULTAN: Wait—this gift looks very familiar. *(He looks at her.)* You! I've seen you before. You're the woman who brought me those gemstones.

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Yes, your majesty, it is I. And perhaps your majesty has forgotten that on that visit you made a promise to me.

SULTAN: I did?

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: If your highness will forgive my boldness, you promised the hand of your daughter in marriage to my son, prince Aladdin.

SULTAN: Prince Aladdin?

ALADDIN'S MOTHER: Yes. He has come with me today to receive what he was promised.

Enter Aladdin. He approaches and bows to the sultan.

ALADDIN: Your majesty, I would not have come if I had any doubt at all about your reputation as being the most just and merciful ruler in all the lands of the east.

SULTAN: Well... I...

ALADDIN: I have come in full assurance that you are a man of your word and always keep your promises.

SULTAN: Well... I try.

ALADDIN: Being assured of your justice and your steadfastness, I appear before you today to receive that which was promised to me. I have come for my bride.

VIZIER: You impudent little—

SULTAN: Enough! Yes, I did make such a promise. And being a man of my word, I will keep my promise, but on one condition. You must be able to provide for her a palace of equal grandeur to my own.

ALADDIN: I agree to your condition. If your majesty would be pleased to use this device *(pulls out a "spy glass")*, he may see with his own eyes the accommodations I have prepared for the princess.

The sultan takes the spy glass and directs it to the place Aladdin points out. As he is looking, he exclaims.

SULTAN: How marvelous! I don't remember ever seeing such a palace on the outskirts of my kingdom. When did you build this?

ALADDIN: I had it specially designed just for your daughter.

SULTAN: This is truly amazing!

ALADDIN: Your daughter will live in splendor and receive anything her heart desires.

SULTAN: Well, it seems you have earned my daughter's hand.

The sultan goes over to the princess.

SULTAN: My daughter, will you receive this man as your prince?

PRINCESS: I shall, father. He seems most noble and kind-hearted. *(pause)* And rich.

SULTAN: All right, then it is agreed. Let us prepare for the wedding.

They all exit. Vizier is the last one to exit. Before he exits, he turns around and says:

VIZIER: I smell magic at work... No good will come of this!

He exits angrily.

SCENE 14

SHAHRAZAD: Far away in Africa, the magician was still alive and well. It had been quite a while since he had left Aladdin, and now he began thinking about the lamp.

Enter the magician from curtain 2.

MAGICIAN: Oh, why did I let my temper get the best of me? Couldn't I have been a little more patient? I know I punished that little street urchin as he deserved, but alas for my lamp! It lies in a chasm that I cannot reach. Oh, my lamp, my lamp. How shall I ever retrieve it? *(pause)* I think I shall use my magic arts to find another way to reach my lamp.

He disappears through curtain 2. From behind curtain 2 you hear the magician chanting. (sound effects?) Or, if you have a bowl of dry ice or a cauldron, he could do this little scene in front of the audience.

MAGICIAN: Maarifa! Maarifa! Kuwaambia mimi ya hatima ya Aladdin! *(Taken from an online translation into Swahili of, "Knowledge! Knowledge! Tell me the fate of Aladdin!" You can have the magician speak English, if you wish.)*

Then he sticks just his head out from curtain 2, holding it tight below his chin.

MAGICIAN: Oh, no! It's impossible! It can't be! There must be a mistake!

He disappears behind curtain 2 again. From behind the curtain you hear chanting again.

MAGICIAN: Maarifa! Maarifa! Kuwaambia mimi ya hatima ya Aladdin!

The magician comes out from behind curtain 2 and comes to the middle of the stage. He looks stunned.

MAGICIAN: Aladdin lives?! I don't know how, but he survived! And he is married to a princess and lives in a palace?! By what means has he accomplished this? The lamp, of course! MY LAMP! No one gets rich by my lamp but me! I'll get my revenge on Aladdin! He hasn't seen the last of me!

The magician angrily exits through curtain 2.

SHAHRAZAD: And tomorrow night I shall tell you just what the magician did to Aladdin.

DUNYAZAD: Aw... why does it always have to be tomorrow night?

SHAHRAZAD: It's just... best that way.

SHAHRIYAR: *(standing up)* It's that way because your sister is the cleverest woman who ever lived in my kingdom. Her wit is sharper than that of even my wisest sage. She has kept herself alive by her cunning. She is fit to be my queen for the rest of her life. *(turning to Shah Zaman)* Shah Zaman, do you still believe that all women are evil?

SHAH ZAMAN: My brother, I must confess that these two *(gestures to the sisters)* are different from any others I have known. The older deserves to rule as queen. *(pause)* But the younger deserves a royal marriage, as well.

SHAHRIYAR: Do you have something in mind?

SHAH ZAMAN: Ladies, you may go.

Shahrazad leads Dunyazad out, stage right.

SHAH ZAMAN: Brother, I don't want to return to Samarkand. I've been away from home too long. I want to remain here in our homeland, even if it means giving up being a king. I think I'd almost rather be a servant here at home than a king faraway.

SHAHRIYAR: As you wish, brother. I will not make you return to Samarkand. I will send someone else.

SHAH ZAMAN: Also, I propose that we all be united as a royal family. Two brothers and two sisters.

SHAHRIYAR: But younger one will not be of marriageable age for several years.

SHAH ZAMAN: I am willing to wait. I am not anxious to remarry in the near future. I need time. A very long engagement is fine with me.

SHAHRIYAR: Then it will be arranged.

SHAH ZAMAN: Good night, brother.

SHAHRIYAR: Good night.

Shah Zaman exits stage left.

Shahriyar goes over and lies down. Then the blue lights eventually go off.

Enter the vizier from stage left.

VIZIER: Good morning, your majesty. I trust you slept well.

SHAHRIYAR: *(waking up)* Vizier...

VIZIER: Yes, your majesty? Are you ready for your itinerary?

SHAHRIYAR: Vizier, I have something to ask you.

VIZIER: I am at your service, sire.

SHAHRIYAR: Vizier, my brother would like to marry your younger daughter.

VIZIER: But sire, she is not yet of marriageable age.

SHAHRIYAR: Yes, I know, but in several years, when she is eligible.

VIZIER: I am hardly worthy of such an honor. To have both my daughters marry king's sons!

SHAHRIYAR: But you are worthy, my faithful vizier. Your children testify to your worthiness. You have educated them with skill and wisdom. It is from you that they inherited their worthiness. In fact, you are worthy of a much higher post than simply a vizier. I am thinking of promoting you to being the ruler of a kingdom.

VIZIER: A kingdom? Me? The ruler of a kingdom? Where?

SHAHRIYAR: I was thinking of a really large kingdom. One so large that it needs a very capable leader.

(pause) I was thinking of... Samarkand?

VIZIER: But your majesty's brother—

SHAHRIYAR: Will not be returning there.

VIZIER: As your majesty wishes.

SHAHRIYAR: Well, then, please see to all the necessary paperwork. Now, on to my day. I feel the need of some sunshine. Let us go into the garden. You may enlighten me about my itinerary as we take a stroll.

VIZIER: Yes, your majesty.

They both exit stage left.

SCENE 15

The blue lights indicating night then go on.

Shahrazad enters from stage right with Dunyazad.

DUNYAZAD: Shahrazad... what the king said last night about you being the queen for the rest of your life— does this mean I don't have to be afraid anymore?

SHAHRAZAD: That's exactly what it means, Dunyazad. And it's not just you and I that don't have to live in fear anymore. All the young women of our kingdom, and their families, will rejoice when they hear about the king's change of heart.

The vizier enters.

DUNYAZAD: Father!

He goes over to his daughters.

VIZIER: My daughters! My daughters! *(He gives them a hug. Then he looks at Shahrazad.)* Shahrazad... I should not have doubted you.

SHAHRAZAD: Oh, father, it's natural that a father should worry about his daughter's destiny.

VIZIER: Well, it seems that we'll all be one big happy royal family now.

Shahriyar and Shah Zaman enter from stage left. The vizier turns his attention to the king.

SHAHRIYAR: Vizier, I have a special request of you.

VIZIER: Anything your majesty wishes.

SHAHRIYAR: I wish you to join us tonight to hear the end of the story of Aladdin.

VIZIER: Your majesty is most generous.

The vizier sits, as does Shah Zaman, and eventually Shahriyar. (Having the vizier on stage at the end of this story will make for a very easy start to the curtain calls. The two king, the vizier and the two daughters will all take their first bow together as a group before the other actors begin coming on stage.)

SHAHRIYAR: And now, let us hear the end of the tale of Aladdin!

SHAHRAZAD: And so it was that one day, the magician arrived in Aladdin's town. It didn't take him long to find the palace, for it dwarfed every other building, including the sultan's own palace.

Enter magician from curtain 3.

MAGICIAN: *(as though looking at the palace located somewhere behind the audience)* What is this? What a shamelessly indulgent display of enchanted opulence! When I get the lamp back... I'll have the genie make me...one just like it! But there's the catch—how to get the lamp back. The lamp is probably in that palace somewhere. But how do I get in and where do I search? *(He turns around, walks in a circle, and thinks.)*

Hmmm... Yes, that's it. I have a plan.

Magician exits back through curtain 2. He enters again, carrying a sac over one shoulder (or bag or box or

however you want to stage it). *The bag or box is bumpy, as though containing lamps. (The lamps being inside a container of some kind avoids the problem of needing many lamps.) The magician is holding up one lamp.*

MAGICIAN: *(walking about the stage and calling out loudly)* New lamps for old! Get your new lamps here! I am trading new lamps for old ones. Bring your old lamps and I'll give you new ones! *(Then he looks up at where the palace would be. He appears to see someone in a window.)* Young lady in the palace! *(pause)*

Yes, you! Do you have any old lamps you want to trade in for a nice new one? *(pause as if she is answering)*

Well, go and look around and see if you can find one! *(pause)* Yes, I'll wait. *(Then he goes back to walking about on the stage.)*

New lamps for old! Get your new lamps here! I am trading new lamps for old ones!

New lamps for old! *(Then he stops and looks back again at the place where he saw the lady in the window.)*

Did you find one? *(pause)* Yes, bring it on down. *(He puts a hand up over his eyes, if he hasn't done so already, so that the audience can more easily follow his gaze. He pantomimes watching the servant as she comes down from the palace and around to where she will enter through curtain 1.)*

Servant enters from curtain 1, carrying Aladdin's lamp.

SERVANT: Are you really giving away new lamps in exchange for old ones? Is it some kind of trick?

MAGICIAN: It's no trick. Call me crazy, but I really like old lamps. And this one *(taking it from the servant)* is just what I am looking for. *(Then he hands the servant a new lamp.)* Here is your new lamp, as I promised.

SERVANT: Thank you. This one is much better than that old thing.

MAGICIAN: Oh, yes. That one is much nicer than this old thing. Enjoy your new lamp.

SERVANT: I will. Goodbye.

The servant exits through curtain 1.

MAGICIAN: Yes! I have the lamp! And now for some magic!

The magician stands near the center of curtain 2. He rubs the lamp and the genie appears from behind the curtain.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: *(unemotionally)* Yes, master. What do you desire?

MAGICIAN: Aren't you surprised to see me?

GENIE OF THE LAMP: I am the slave of whoever owns the lamp. I have had many masters. But why have you called me?

MAGICIAN: Genie, I want you to remove that palace *(points to the invisible palace behind the audience)* along with everything and everyone inside it, and take it to Africa!

GENIE OF THE LAMP: It shall be done.

The genie then vanishes behind curtain 2. The magician looks up at the palace. He pantomimes seeing it disappear, then suddenly says:

MAGICIAN: Wait! Take me, too! *(While he says this he runs out through curtain 2.)*

SHAHRAZAD: The next morning, the sultan went out on his balcony to gaze at Aladdin palace. This had become a morning ritual ever since his daughter had married Aladdin and gone to live at his palace.

Sultan enters from curtain 2, followed by his vizier and several guards. He takes up his spyglass and searches the horizon. Not seeing the palace, of course, he cleans the lens on the end of the spyglass then looks again.

SULTAN: How can this be? I cannot find Aladdin's palace anywhere on the horizon! It can't have simply vanished over night!

VIZIER: Yes, it can, your majesty. I tried to tell you that Aladdin's palace is the work of enchantment. I don't think the palace was ever a real one, like yours.

SULTAN: And what has become of my daughter? Aladdin shall answer for this! And then... I'll execute him.

The sultan exits, followed by the vizier and the guards, through curtain 2.

SHAHRAZAD: Now it happened that Aladdin had not been in the palace when the genie picked it up. Aladdin had gone into the city on a matter of business, and he had not yet discovered that his palace was missing.

Aladdin enters from curtain 1, and just strolls toward center stage, as if taking a leisurely walk. Immediately, two of the king's guards come bursting through curtain 1.

GUARD 1: There he is! Grab him!

The guards each grab one of Aladdin's arms. They start taking him towards curtain 3.

ALADDIN: Hey! What's going on?

GUARD 2: The sultan wants to see you.

ALADDIN: What's the hurry?

GUARD 1: The sultan says he'll have your head for this.

ALADDIN: For what?

GUARD 2: For losing his daughter.

ALADDIN: What are you talking about?

GUARD 1: Come on, let's go!

The guards push and pull Aladdin through curtain 3.

The sultan, followed by his vizier (and any other attendants), enters through curtain 2. Immediately after, the two guards bring Aladdin through curtain 2.

ALADDIN: Your majesty, what is the meaning of this?

SULTAN: Come here!

The guards let Aladdin go and he goes over to the sultan.

SULTAN: *(handing Aladdin the spyglass)* Explain to me why I cannot see your palace.

Aladdin puts the spyglass to his eye and looks. He scans the horizon several times. Perhaps he even tries to clean the lens then looks again. He slowly lowers the glass.

ALADDIN: *(mystified)* Sire, I cannot explain it.

SULTAN: Your palace is gone, Aladdin! I don't care so much about the palace, but where is my daughter?

ALADDIN: I... I don't know, your majesty.

SULTAN: Guards, take him to the executioner!

ALADDIN: No, wait! I am sure there is an explanation. I just have to find it. Please, your majesty, give me three days. If I have not found the princess in three days, then you may execute me.

SULTAN; *(pauses to think)* Three days, Aladdin. Not one hour more.

The sultan angrily exits again through curtain 2. The vizier lingers.

VIZIER: *(points at Aladdin)* This is what comes of dabbling in magic!

Then the vizier exits through curtain 2, followed by the guards.

Aladdin is left alone on stage. He wanders about scratching his head and thinking. Then he begins wringing his hands.

ALADDIN: What am I going to do? What could possibly have happened? Where do you start looking for a missing palace? *(Suddenly he notices the ring on his finger—the one the genie gave him.)* This ring! I forgot about it. The genie said it was good for one wish. I wonder how it works. Perhaps you rub it just like the lamp. *(Aladdin starts moving towards the center of curtain 2. He starts rubbing the ring and gets right in front of the split in curtain 2.)* Magic ring, take me to my palace! *(Then he suddenly steps back and disappears through curtain 2, with our without a puff of smoke.)*

SCENE 16

As soon as Aladdin disappears behind curtain 2, the set crew needs to quickly bring out the furnishings that will suggest an interior scene in Aladdin's palace, such as a fancy table with tablecloth and silver tea set, one or two fancy chairs, and perhaps a fancy lamp or end table, or even a decorated screen. Somewhere, perhaps on a side table, there needs to be two fancy glasses and a fancy old bottle that looks like it could contain expensive wine. There must also be something behind which Aladdin can hide.

SHAHRAZAD: Immediately, Aladdin was transported all the way to Africa, right to the spot where the genie had set down the palace.

DUNYAZAD: Did Aladdin know that the magician had stolen his lamp?

SHAHRAZAD: No. In fact, Aladdin had almost forgotten about the magician. It had been years since he had last seen him. Aladdin knew that something very strange was going on, however, and he decided the best way to investigate was to sneak into the palace and keep himself hidden. So he climbed in through the window and hid himself in the princess's room.

Enter Aladdin through curtain 3. He looks around the room briefly, then has to hide himself as he hears voices of people coming into the room (from behind curtain 1 or 2).

The magician begins speaking while still behind the curtain, but enters by the time the princess answers. He has the lamp strung up so that it hangs at his side (by way of a shoulder strap).

MAGICIAN: I am beginning to lose patience with you! You are being completely unreasonable! Don't you understand that Aladdin is dead? Your father executed him!

PRINCESS: No, I won't believe it! You're lying!

MAGICIAN: Aladdin is gone forever! You must remarry and start a new life here in Africa. And I've already

chosen your new husband—me!

PRINCESS: No, I will never marry you! Never!

MAGICIAN: I will persuade you no matter how long it takes.

PRINCESS: No! Never!

The princess goes and sits down. She puts her head down and perhaps even puts a handkerchief to her eyes. The magician remains standing, or pacing perhaps.

MAGICIAN: I can get anything I want now that I have this lamp. I could use its magic on you, but I would prefer if you would come to your senses on your own and see that you have no choice but to marry me.

PRINCESS: *(head down)* Never!

MAGICIAN: I'll leave you to think it over. I'll be back soon.

Magician exits. After a few seconds, Aladdin slowly begins to come out of his hiding place.

ALADDIN: *(whispering)* Princess!

The princess looks back and is startled to see Aladdin.

ALADDIN: Shhhh! No one but you knows I am here. I heard what that vile magician said.

PRINCESS: Aladdin, get us out of here!

ALADDIN: I will, but there's just one problem. I need that lamp that he carries about.

PRINCESS: That old lamp? Is it special?

ALADDIN: It's a magic lamp with a genie inside of it. Whoever owns the lamp commands the genie.

PRINCESS: I don't suppose you can just take it from him my force?

ALADDIN: The moment the magician see me here, he'll use the magic of the lamp against me. It's no use trying to fight him directly. We'll have to come up with a clever plan that doesn't involve the lamp.

PRINCESS: You mean we'll have to kill him?

ALADDIN: I'm afraid so, my dear.

PRINCESS: Please, can we do it without blood and yucky stuff?

ALADDIN: I'll try to make it as gentle and easy as possible. Do you know if there is a town nearby?

PRINCESS: Yes, I saw one very close by when I looked out the window yesterday.

ALADDIN: Good. Let's hope they have a well-stocked apothecary shop. I'll be back very soon. In the mean time, it will be necessary for you to be nice to the magician.

PRINCESS: What?

ALADDIN: Yes, it's part of the plan. You must make him trust you. Try to fool him into thinking that you are changing your mind.

PRINCESS: I don't want to.

ALADDIN: You must! Otherwise my plan won't work. Just try your best. I'll be back very soon with the key ingredient..

PRINCESS: Please don't be gone for long. The magician scares me.

ALADDIN: Don't worry, I'll be back before you know it.

Aladdin then exits through curtain 3, as if he is sneaking out. Magician enters through either curtain 1 or 2. The princess tries to pull herself together and not look so unhappy.

MAGICIAN: I've given you some time to think it over. Have you come to your senses yet?

PRINCESS: Well... given the hopelessness of the situation... and the fact that I will never see Aladdin ever again... I've... well... it seems that I may have no choice but to consider your proposal.

MAGICIAN: Well, this certainly is a step in the right direction.

PRINCESS: In fact... I was wondering if you would care to dine with me later. *(The princess may at this point also hold her head higher and do some kind of primping, like straightening her head or dress.)*

MAGICIAN: Excellent idea! We'll eat in the grand hall. I'll have the servants prepare a large feast.

PRINCESS: No—I mean, I would prefer a more... intimate setting. Why don't you come right here and dine with me in my private quarters?

MAGICIAN: As you wish, your highness. I shall go and prepare myself.

The magician exits. As soon as he is gone, Aladdin comes in through curtain 3. He cautiously approaches the princess. He is carrying a small bag (theoretically containing powdered poison).

ALADDIN: Princess, did anything happen while I was away?

PRINCESS: Yes, the magician came here to see me and I invited him to dine with me.

ALADDIN: Brilliant! That's exactly what we need. Here. *(He hands her the bag of powder.)* Before he comes back, put this powder into his glass before you fill it.

PRINCESS: Is this what I think it is? *(Indicating the little bag)*

ALADDIN: There's no magic in it—just chemistry.

PRINCESS: Hide, quickly. The magician could come back anytime now. I'll get things ready.

Aladdin hides in the room and the princess sets out two glasses and the fancy bottle. She pours the powder into what will be the magician's glass and then proceeds to pour drink into the glasses (pantomime without real liquid is fine). Then she sits down.

Enter the magician.

PRINCESS: Well, my dear, glad to see you back so soon.

MAGICIAN: *(grinning)* Ah, it's music to my ears to hear you speak like that.

PRINCESS: Please, sit and join me for a drink while we wait for the servants to arrive with the food.

The magician sits down opposite the princess. He picks up the glass, smiles, and begins to drink. He keeps drinking and finishes it all in one gulp. The princess is holding her glass to her lips but not drinking, as she is watching to see what will happen. The magician sets his cup down.

Aladdin then comes out of hiding.

MAGICIAN: What? What are you doing here?

ALADDIN: Oh, I just came to say goodbye: Goodbye!

Magician suddenly looks like the poison is taking effect (sounds and gestures at the director's discretion) and then goes limp and slides out of his chair. Or, however you want to stage his death scene.

Aladdin goes over and removes the lamp from the magician.

ALADDIN: Guards! *(pause, then he claps his hands)* Guards! Servants! Anyone?

Then two guards, or servants, appear from curtain 2.

ALADDIN: Take this vile creature and dispose of him!

The guards/servants drag the magician off stage through curtain 2.

ALADDIN: Now, how about returning to our kingdom?

PRINCESS: Yes. But how?

ALADDIN: You don't have to do anything. Just sit tight and enjoy the ride.

Then Aladdin rubs the lamp and the genie appears from behind curtain 2 (or however you want to stage it).

GENIE OF THE LAMP: What is your wish, master?

ALADDIN: Aren't you surprised to see me?

GENIE OF THE LAMP: *(calmly and unemotionally)* I have had many masters. I am the slave of whoever holds the lamp.

ALADDIN: *(a bit taken aback)* Well... no matter. Genie, take this palace back to the princess's kingdom!

GENIE OF THE LAMP: I hear and obey.

PRINCESS: Wait—one thing. Make sure the palace doesn't... land on anyone, if you know what I mean.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: Certainly.

The genie then raises his hands over his head and begin shaking his hands (just from the wrists). He closes his eyes and concentrates. Aladdin and the princess pretend to shake and sway. Then the genie puts his hands down and all is calm.

GENIE OF THE LAMP: I have fulfilled your wish.

PRINCESS: We're back?

GENIE OF THE LAMP: It has been done. Is there anything you desire, master?

ALADDIN: Hmm.. actually I was thinking of putting on an addition. Let's take a stroll outside and I'll show you where I want it. Then the princess and I can go over to her father's palace and surprise everyone. Shall we go, my dear?

PRINCESS: *(with a twinkle in her eye)* Your wish is my command.

Aladdin, the princess and the genie exit through curtain 2. Then the set crews quickly removes the princess's furnishings from the stage.

As soon as the center of the stage is clear, Shahrazad begins to move to center stage she will be right in the center as she says "The end."

SHAHRAZAD: Of course, the sultan was overjoyed to see his daughter back again. He was so happy that he proclaimed a kingdom-wide celebration.

DUNYAZAD: And then he made Aladdin the crown prince of the kingdom.

SHAHRAZAD: And he made Aladdin his heir, bestowing upon him the title of crown prince.

DUNYAZAD: And the people of the kingdom loved Aladdin and the princess.

SHAHRAZAD; The people of the kingdom loved Aladdin and the princess. When the sultan died, Aladdin took the throne, and the princess became the queen.

DUNYAZAD: And they had lots of children.

SHAHRAZAD: And they were blessed with many children and lived a long and very happy life. And their children and grandchildren ruled the kingdom after them for many generations. The end.

Shahrazad bows and Dunyazad, the Vizier, Shahriyar and Shah Zaman clap for her.

Then, those four join Shahrazad in center stage and all five take a bow. At this point the audience will realize that the play is over and will begin clapping. When those five have taken their bows, you can continue with the curtain call and bring all the other actors onto to the stage (in small or large groups) to take their bows.

Or, you can have these five disappear quickly behind the curtains after they clap for Shahrazad, then begin your curtain call.