



Preview Script

ARABIAN NIGHTS

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Arabian Nights

Book and Lyrics by Adam Forde

Music by David Perkins

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NOTE : This is a preview version, and does not contain the full script.

Genre : Musical Comedy
Principals : 18m, 9f, 11m/f
Duration : Approximately 2 hours 10 mins (excluding interval)
Acts : Two (Scenes: 10 in Act 1; 5 in Act 2)
Target audience : General

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Synopsis

Act One

The show opens with a brief **Prologue** as the Vizier's daughter Sheherazade tells her younger sister Dinarzade, a bed-time story on the eve of King Shahryar's wedding. All the population celebrates **The King's Wedding**. Everyone is happy and secure until the King discovers he has been betrayed by his wife and has her and her lover executed. He vows he will never again let a woman take advantage of him and announces he will marry a new wife each day and have her executed the following morning. After **Many Weddings**, Sheherazade volunteers to marry the King and bring an end to the deaths.

Sheherazade persuades her distraught father to arrange the marriage and explains to Dinarzade how she plans to save her own and the kingdom's other women's lives - by telling stories. **Sheherazade's Wedding** is a more sombre affair with everyone in the kingdom expecting her to become yet another victim. The King and Sheherazade process to his chamber for her wedding night.

On **The First Morning** after the wedding, Sheherazade persuades her husband to allow her to tell Dinarzade a final story, he decides to listen as well. She launches into the story of **Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (Part One)**. The story comes to life and the King becomes wrapped up in the fortunes of Ali Baba, his brother and the thieves but is angered **Later the First Morning** when Sheherazade stops half way through the story saying it is time for her execution.

With nobody able to tell him the end of the story, Shahryar decides to let his wife live another day so that she can finish the story later that night. Her strategy has worked. Later that day Sheherazade tells the story of **Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (Part Two)** and speaks through the night until **The Next Morning** when it is time for the Swordsman to do his work.

Asked by Dinarzade if she is afraid of dying, Sheherazade replies saying she is no more afraid than the fisherman who found a genie in a bottle in one of their favourite stories. The King demands to hear the story and announces that his wife will remain alive another day in order to tell it. She tells the story of **The Fisherman and the Genie**, delighting the King. After the story **Sheherazade Sleeps** and the Citizens show their concern for her future, while the King decides that he will not let the situation continue. The act ends with Shahryar telling the sleeping Sheherazade that it is time to end her life.

Act Two

King Shahryar explains to the Vizier that he has become fond of Sheherazade but is afraid her love for him will go the same way as his first wife. Because of that, the King has decided she must die. And so **Sheherazade Faces Execution**. As she walks towards her fate, she reminds her sister of another story which at the last moment the King demands to hear. Sheherazade is reprieved once more. Needless to say everybody except the Swordsman is delighted. Later that day Sheherazade tells the story of **The Ass and His Ass**. At the end of the story an amused King talks of future stories but adds a reminder that he is still in control of his wife's destiny.

The Citizens explain how the stories continue for more than a year. On one night, Sheherazade and Dinarzade tell him the story of **The Little Beggar** and hint that the next story will be that of **Sinbad the Sailor**. The King looks forward to Sinbad; his feelings for Sheherazade have grown to love.

Sheherazade has been telling stories to her husband for 1000 nights. Her execution is barely mentioned. On the 1001st night she tells the King she has run dry of stories and reminds him of his vow that the end of the stories would mean the end of her life. He is distraught until she says she has one more story but that she does not know the end of it. He insists she tell the story and so she begins Sheherazade's Story. It soon becomes clear she is telling him his own history as she talks of how a young girl loved the King despite his becoming a tyrant, killing wives day after day. He angrily interrupts but she tells him it is her own story and continues until she reveals that she is expecting the King's child. King Shahryar is delighted, proclaims that the death sentence upon his wife is lifted and, in the Finale, they sing of their love for each other and are joined by the Citizens who sing the main theme, Arabian Nights.

Running Time

Act One : Approximately 1 hour, 10 minutes
Act Two : Approximately 1 hour

NOTE : It is possible to remove stories in order to cut the running time. The Fisherman and the Genie could be cut from Act One while in Act Two, The Ass and His Ass could go. If one or other of these cuts is being considered, a small change in dialogue into and out of the stories could be provided. Please contact the authors via Plays And Musicals.

Characters (18m, 9f, 11m/f)

Principals (2m, 2f)

- Sheherazade (f) Beautiful and wise beyond her years. She is a renowned story-teller and is very resourceful, thinking on her feet in the most dangerous of moments. Despite his reputation, she has always loved the King, a love that grows as the show goes on. She is dutiful towards her father and adores her sister. She is as comfortable in a playful moment as she is in the times when serious formality is required.
- Dinarzade (f) Sheherazade's younger, innocent and devoted sister. Very trusting and plays her part in the initial deception of the King.
- The Vizier (m) Father to Sheherazade and Dinarzade as well as the King's chief adviser. Wise and extremely formal but adores his daughters and is very protective. Once the King has married Sheherazade, the Vizier is constantly on edge and expects his daughter to be killed. Lives with the conflict between his love for his family and duty to the King.
- King Shahryar (m) At the start of the show he is as happy as anyone could be but soon he is dreadfully hurt and his trust in women disappears. He is seen by most as being a brutal and ruthless tyrant with no sense of mercy. There is, however, always a sense that the King we saw at the beginning is still there struggling to get out. He has a dry sense of humour. His relationship with Sheherazade grows subtly as time goes by and their exchanges become warmer until he is able to shake off his brutality and return to his true self.

The Betrayal (2m, 3f)

- First Queen (f) Unfaithful to the King
- Masoud (m) A slave.
- Swordsman (m)
- Second Wife (f)
- Third Wife (f)

Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (3m, 2f, 4m/f)

- Ali Baba (m) A cheerful and honest, but at the same time opportunistic, woodcutter. He is a good and generous man and loves his wife despite her shrewishness.
- Raiyah (f) Ali Baba's wife. Ever so slightly greedy. She loves her husband but does not hesitate to nag him. She is not certain she trusts Morgiana and is competitive; Morgiana is, after all, very pretty.
- Chief Thief (m) Larger than life and deliciously evil. Would not think twice about slicing off a head for the merest of slights. Should be very tall or very short (if short he should have a bit of a complex). A classic villain.
- Dim Thief (m/f)
- Little Thief (m/f)
- Tiny Thief (m/f)
- Kasim Baba (m) Ali Baba's brother and a bully. Already wealthy, he is greedy for more and it is this greed that leads to his come-uppance.
- Morgiana (f) Beautiful and clever. She is a loyal servant to Ali Baba and saves his life thanks to her quick thinking. (Needs a talented singer and dancer).
- Cobbler (m/f) Money-grabbing and boastful. It is his loose tongue and small-trader greed that leads Chief Thief to Ali Baba.
- Forty Thieves Any number, either sex

The Fisherman and The Genie (2m)

- Fisherman (m) Poor and slightly sorry for himself. Witty and quick.
- Genie (m) Classic big tough statuesque hunk of a genie. Gullible.

Characters (Cont'd)

The Ass and His Ass (2m, 2m/f)

- Stupid Farmer (m) Almost a Simple Simon character. Very easily conned because of his stupidity and good nature. Never realises he's been had, indeed believes he's avoided being taken for a ride.
- Robber 1 (m) Smart and sly and thinks quickly on his feet. Bit of a 'geezer' and uses a chirpy cheery personality to con the Farmer.
- Robber 2 (m/f) Not as clever as the other Robber and does what he's told - he does the 'donkey' work!
- Donkey (m/f)

The Little Beggar (4m, 2f, 3m/f)

- Little Beggar (m) Small and cheerful despite his poverty. Needs to be physically supple in order to be flung about during the story.
- Tailor (m) Wealthy member of the community, bit of a snob and a social climber. Quite prepared to dump the Beggar to avoid getting into trouble. Confesses in the end.
- Tailor's Wife (f) Similar to the Tailor. A merry hostess, full of laughs, until the Beggar appears to have choked on her fish.
- Doctor's Servant (f) Kindly to others but shrewish to her master. Very keen to avoid blame for the Beggar's apparent death.
- Doctor (m/f) Bit of a silly-ass. Dedicated but probably not a very good doctor but swift to take action to avoid paying blood money when it appears he is responsible for the Beggar's death. His better nature surfaces when he confesses.
- Cook (m/f) A rough and ready character, not a pristine chef at all. Prepared to commit violence to protect his/her food but falls apart when he/she thinks the Beggar is dead. Recovers to hide the body to avoid blame.
- Slave Hassid (m) Lowest of the low with a chip on his shoulder. Although very drunk when he 'kills' the Beggar, this should not be over the top drunk acting.
- Guard (m)
- Judge (m/f) 'Fraitfullay' posh and slightly short-tempered authority figure. Should be played by a smaller person. Relishes passing the death sentence.

Sinbad The Sailor (3m, 2m/f)

- Sinbad (the Porter) (m) A humble but resentful courier who bemoans his fate - his station in life is 'all the fault of others'. Gradually, however, as Old Sinbad tells his tale, Porter Sinbad changes to a happy-go-lucky, glad-to-be-alive character.
- Servant (m/f)
- Old Sinbad (m) Kindly, but lonely, and very old version, of the famous sailor/adventurer. He is delighted to find someone to tell his stories to. Uses his adventures as a moral for the Porter to understand that his life could be worse.
- Young Sinbad (m) Resourceful and hardy traveller. He begins as a spoilt rich young man who has wasted his fortune but, through his travels and travails, he regains his wealth, learns to realise its value and becomes a generous benefactor.
- Captain (m/f)
- Crew Any number, either sex
- Hunters Any number, either sex

Chorus

Flexible; any size, any sex, all ages. These are the Citizens and a host of other characters (viz Guards, Thieves, The Cave, Market Traders & their Customers, Donkeys, Street Performers, Dancers, Buildings, The Sea, A Whale, The Roc, The Roc's Egg, Snakes etc. As Citizens, the chorus is similar to a Greek Chorus, narrating the story of the King and Sheherazade throughout the play. They also play all the characters in the stories. Apart from the four central characters - Sheherazade, Dinarzade, King Shahryar and the Vizier - the Chorus can be played by as few as fifteen people or as many as fifty or more. When not involved in stories they can either be off-stage or sitting quietly watching the action. In the original production the chorus was used to create scenery as well as characters, eg Ali Baba's cave, the Roc, its egg, the whale, a balcony to throw the Little Beggar over etc.

Scenes

Act One

Prologue	The Vizier's House
Scene 1	The King's Wedding
Scene 2	Many Weddings
Scene 3	Sheherazade's Wedding
Scene 4	The First Morning
Scene 5	Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (Part One)
Scene 6	Later the First Morning
Scene 7	Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (Part Two)
Scene 8	The Next Morning
Scene 9	The Fisherman and the Genie
Scene 10	Sheherazade Sleeps

Act Two

Scene 1	Sheherazade Faces Execution
Scene 2	The Ass and His Ass
Scene 3	The Little Beggar
Scene 4	Sinbad the Sailor
Scene 5	Sheherazade's Story

Musical Numbers

Act One

	Opening	
1	The King's Wedding	Vizier, Sheherazade, Dinarzade & Chorus
1a	Wedding Tag / Underscore	
1b	Betrayal & Execution	
2	The King's Wedding (Reprise #1)	Vizier & Chorus
3	It Wasn't Always Like This	King Shahryar
4	Arabian Nights	Sheherazade & Dinarzade
5	The King's Wedding (Reprise #2)	Chorus
5a	Morning Music	
5b	Before Ali Baba	
5c	The Story of Ali Baba	
5d	Open / Close Sesame	
6	We're Thieves	Chief Thief & Thieves
6a	Open / Close Sesame	
6b	Underscore	
6c	Underscore	
6d	Open / Close Sesame	
7	We're Thieves (Reprise)	Chief Thief & Thieves
7a	Open Sesame / Kasim's Death	
8	Arabian Nights (Reprise #1)	Sheherazade & Dinarzade
8a	Underscore	
8b	Open / Close Sesame	
8c	Market Scene	
8d	Underscore	
8e	The Cobbler & the Thief	
8f	Underscore	
9	Deception	Morgiana (<i>sings & spirited dance</i>) & Raiyah (<i>dance only</i>)
9a	Underscore	
9b	Underscore	
9c	The Fisherman & the Genie	
9d	The Genie Appears	
9e	The Genie Vanishes	
9f	Underscore	
10	Sheherazade	Chorus Solo, King Shahryar, Dinarzade, Vizier & Chorus

Musical Numbers (Cont'd)

Act Two

10a	Opening	
10b	Execution	
10c	Sheherazade Waits for the King	
10d	Before The Ass & His Ass	
11	The Ass & His Ass	Farmer, Robbers & Chorus (with solos)
12	Arabian Nights (Reprise #2)	Sheherazade
12a	The Story of the Little Beggar	
12b	Beggar Underscore #1	
12c	Beggar Underscore #2	
12d	Beggar Underscore #3	
12e	Beggar Underscore #4	
13	I Killed the Little Beggar	Judge, Slave Hassid, Cook, Doctor, Servant, Tailor, Tailor's Wife, Little Beggar, Sheherazade, Dinarzade, King Shahryar & Chorus
14	Why Should It Be Me?	Porter Sinbad
14a	Sinbad Meets Sinbad	
14b	The Story of Sinbad the Sailor (Underscore)	
15	Sinbad's Return	Young Sinbad & Chorus
16	Why Should It Be Me? (Reprise)	Porter Sinbad
17	Finale	King Shahryar, Sheherazade & Chorus
18	Bows / Encore	Company
18a	Exit	

Instrumentation

Arranged for eight players as follows :-

- Piano / Keyboards (playing from the vocal score)
- Reed 1 (Piccolo / Flute / Clarinet 1)
- Reed 2 (Cor Anglais / Oboe)
- Reed 3 (Clarinet 2 / Bass Clarinet)
- Trumpet / Flugelhorn
- Violin
- Bass Guitar
- Drums / Percussion

Staging Suggestions

Obviously the design of the show depends on budgets available and the ideas and inspirations of those designing the production. However, the more room on stage the better. The simplicity of the settings i.e. virtually nothing, allows the director and cast many opportunities to create scenes using the least amount of materials. There is much scope for physical work with members of the cast becoming walls, islands, huge birds, balconies, staircases and so on. Dragging in trucks and flats will interrupt the flow of the storytelling.

In the original production there was a space down stage right which became the King's bed-chamber and, once the bed was put in place, remained a private area for the King and Sheherazade with occasional visits from Dinarzade and the Vizier. It was here that all the stories started before the characters came to life on the rest of the stage. To balance that area, when Old Sinbad told his tale, he and Porter Sinbad sat down stage left.

There was no scenery on stage as such. Drapes about one metre wide were flown in to add colour to scenes and were used for a variety of settings (see below). Hand-held drapes were also used to great effect. Lighting played a major role in setting scenes.

The only props set on stage were enough small cushions for each of the chorus to sit on at the back of the stage. These cushions were also used to represent a variety of things including gold from Ali Baba's cave, pieces of Kasim Baba, hunks of meat etc. Each of the chorus had a small shoulder bag in which were kept any small personal props or items of costume such as blindfolds, hats, head-scarves, belts etc. Larger props were collected from off-stage.

Staging Suggestions (Cont'd)

Ali Baba's Cave:

Could be as elaborate as resources allow with flats and trick doors. The original production had two large white drapes flown in. Members of the chorus wore simple white masks and gracefully pulled the drapes apart to create the magic door when the magic words were uttered.

The Fisherman and the Genie

The sea was represented by three large drapes being waved, sea-like. There was a small hole drilled centre stage and the bottle was put in front of it. When the stopper was removed, 'smoke' was sent through the hole and the genie appeared from behind one of the drapes. At the end of the scene the process was reversed.

The Little Beggar:

The two trick nooses were flown in but could just as easily be two tall actors becoming gibbets and holding the noose. It is essential that trick nooses are used to avoid unfortunate accidents.

Sinbad the Sailor:

The ship was a long brown drape with a seam in the middle. A stick was sown into the seam and the rest of the drape was held by some of the sailors to create the shape of a boat. When they left the boat they simply put it on the floor and stepped over it. The sails were the large white drapes from Ali Baba's cave flown into shoulder height and then gathered at the bottom by one of the sailors.

The whale was about ten actors creating the shape and when the whale came to life they moved and one of them became the tail. The roc's egg was six smaller actors creating a round shape and staying still!

The roc was a head connected to two wings made out of wooden dowels with strips of ribbon tied to them to represent feathers. Five actors then held the roc high up to create the monstrous size.

The giant snakes were simply coloured drapes about fifteen feet long and held by two actors who moved around the stage in a similar way to Chinese dragons.

Costumes

The four main characters should be colourfully dressed to reflect their position in the Kingdom. The chorus have a variety of characters to play and so should be able to change very quickly. In the original production, the chorus all wore white trousers and tops and many of their extra characters were represented by the addition of a sash, hat, belt, waistcoat, jewellery or other simple items. They all went barefoot. One or two characters needed particular costumes and so left the stage to change. Morgiana needs to be very glamorous when she appears for her song and dance with classical harem-style clothes. Authority figures can be easily portrayed with a simple robe on top of their basic whites.

To Judith and Caroline

ACT ONE

Prologue: The Vizier's House

MUSIC - OPENING

Open stage full of beautiful drapes and dimly but prettily lit. There are many cushions around the stage which are used for many purposes throughout the play. During the single instrument underscore the stage steadily darkens and Sheherazade and Dinarzade enter. They are slowly lit. Their father the Vizier is dimly lit some way from the girls and quietly watches them. Sheherazade is telling her sister a story - as the music quietens, we hear Dinarzade gasp and laugh ...

Sheherazade ... but before the genie could land the killing blow, the peasant fell to his knees and cried, "Oh, great and powerful one, please spare me. I will tell you the most wondrous story of magic and cunning the like of which you will never have heard". And the genie stayed his hand and said, "Very well you worthless wretch. Tell me the story and if it is as wonderful as you say, I will spare you. But beware. If the tale does not please me I shall remove your head with my thumb and finger". And so the peasant began his tale. *(Pause)*

Vizier *(Quietly and gently)* Sheherazade ... *(Sheherazade hears but Dinarzade does not).*

Dinarzade Oh, Sheherazade, you can't stop there. What was the peasant's story?

Sheherazade I'll tell you tomorrow, dearest Dinarzade, after the King's wedding. But now it's time for sleep.

Dinarzade *(Reluctantly)* Oh, very well. Goodnight. But I will dream of the peasant, not the silly old King. *(Sleepily)* Although the princess will be a very beautiful bride. Father says the wedding will be the greatest day the kingdom ... *(she drifts off to sleep).*

Sheherazade Goodnight, sweet sister. May all your dreams be happy ones.

Scene 1: The King's Wedding

The lights change and the underscore grows into the music for the opening song. The stage is now filled with excited people getting ready for the wedding. They bring on various drapes to decorate the ceremony. Throughout the song the Royal couple, who emerge from the Chorus, are prepared for their marriage.

MUSIC #1 - "THE KING'S WEDDING"

Vizier All subjects must prepare,
Republicans beware,
The whole world is aware,
That ...

*We'll witness the greatest wedding ever seen,
As our beloved King brings his land a brand new queen.*

All All subjects will prepare,
Opponents should beware,

Group I&II For we are all aware ...

Group III&IV For we are all aware ...

All That ...

*We'll witness the greatest wedding ever seen,
As our beloved King brings his land a brand new queen.*

Women She is beautiful and dutiful,
Her virtue is assured

Men She's a pretty one, a witty one,
The king'll ne'er be bored.

All The feasting lasts for days,
Our players play their plays,

Group I&II The point is to amaze ...

Group III&IV The point is to amaze ...

All And thrill ...

*All those who live to say that they have seen,
The day our noble King gave his land a brand new queen.*

*Her looks appeal, she can cook a meal,
She is the perfect match.
There is nothing wrong, so sing a song
To celebrate this catch.*

Dance - the couple are united as the stage is full of colour and movement.

Women *She is beautiful and dutiful,
Bright as the stars above,*

Men *She's a pretty one, a witty one,
The King is so in love.*

All *We subjects have prepared,
No day will be compared,*

Group I&II *For it has been declared ...*

Group III&IV *For it has been declared ...*

All *That ...*

*We're here to see the joys that will be seen.
Today our noble King brings his land a brand new queen,
A brand new queen,
A brand new queen!*

The song ends on a tableau of marriage and celebration, with the Queen wearing a distinctive red veil, which fades into general movement as members of the chorus reveal the story. The events are enacted with stylised movement by the characters.

MUSIC #1A - WEDDING TAG, UNDERScore

Chorus King Shahryar was the happiest of men.

Chorus He was respected by his kingdom's neighbours,

Chorus Feared by his enemies,

Chorus And loved by all his people.

Chorus His bride was a rare beauty.

Chorus King Shahryar loved her very much.

Chorus They were the perfect couple.

The King and the new Queen greet their subjects. FANFARE IN MUSIC #1A.

Chorus All the King's subjects rejoiced at his happiness.

Chorus Wherever his beautiful new Queen went she touched the hearts of the people.

Chorus King Shahryar was a just King.

Chorus He worked hard to ensure his subjects were safe,

Chorus Secure,

Chorus Healthy,

Chorus Wealthy,

Chorus *(Slight pause - meaningfully)* And loyal.

Chorus Perhaps he worked too hard. *(Perhaps a brief glimpse of the Queen trying to get the working King's attention and looking a bit glum).*

Chorus One day, the King had to visit a distant part of the land.

Chorus He almost left without saying goodbye to the Queen.

Chorus At the city gate he turned back and crept into the palace.

Chorus He wanted to surprise her.

Chorus The Queen was not in their chamber.

Chorus But through an open window King Shahryar heard a familiar voice.

Chorus He stood and watched in horror. *(The chorus freeze leaving a large space).*

Queen: *(Standing alone in the garden)* Masoud. Masoud. Come to me.

MUSIC #1B - BETRAYAL AND EXECUTION, UNDERScore

One of the chorus becomes Masoud.

Chorus A slave crept through the bushes and stood before the Queen.
Chorus Instead of bowing his head ... *(The Queen and Masoud gaze into each other's eyes).*
Chorus He took her in his arms.
Chorus The King cried out, his voice full of sorrow and anger.
King Vizier! Vizier! *(The Vizier runs forward, bowing).* Arrest my wife and her lover. They will be executed in the morning.

The Vizier bows. He and chorus members arrest the Queen and Masoud and take them off. During the following, the chorus slowly turn to face the back of the stage - the King remains facing front.

Chorus The following morning, King Shahryar turned his back on his wife's pleas.

The Queen sobs and tries to catch his eye as she is dragged away.

Chorus He had no mercy. *(Pause).*
Queen: *(Off stage)* Masoud!

A roll of drums ... then silence. The Queen's veil is presented to the King by the Executioner. Everyone but the King bows their head. The stage slowly comes back to life and Sheherazade quietly picks up the red veil.

Scene 2 : Many Weddings

Chorus For months the King stayed alone in his palace.
Chorus Only the Vizier was allowed to see him.

The King signs a scroll - he seems not to care what was on it. The Vizier backs away.

Chorus King Shahryar trusted no one.
Chorus But he was lonely.
Chorus He decided to marry again.
Chorus King Shahryar trusted no one.
Chorus A new wife was chosen.

MUSIC #2 - "THE KING'S WEDDING", REPRISe #1

As the underscore starts, one of the chorus becomes the new wife. Sheherazade prepares her with the dead Queen's veil. The new Queen walks forward with The Vizier to be presented to the King)

Chorus King Shahryar trusted no one.
Chorus This wedding was different.
Chorus There was no celebration.
Chorus No rejoicing.
Chorus For the King announced:
King I can never again trust a woman. Therefore I shall marry a different maiden every day. And each morning she will be taken from my bed chamber and executed.

The new Queen bows and allows the King to take her hands. He lifts the veil from her face. She is gently led off by the Swordsman.

All She is beautiful and dutiful,
 She is the perfect wife,
 She's a pretty one, a witty one,
 She'll give the King her life.

After the chorus, there is a brief silence before a roll of drums signifies the execution. After each execution, the Queen's veil is dropped at the King's feet. At an appropriate moment, Sheherazade picks it up.

Chorus And every day
Chorus A new wife was chosen

MUSIC #2 continues. One of the chorus is dressed by Sheherazade and they go through the same ritual as before.

Vizier *She is beautiful and dutiful,
She is the perfect wife,
She's a pretty one, a witty one,
She'll give the King her life.*

There is a brief silence before a roll of drums signifies another execution. Chorus women each produce a red cloth and drop it during the song to symbolise more executions. Sheherazade gathers them all up.

Chorus This brutality went on every day.

MUSIC #3 - "IT WASN'T ALWAYS LIKE THIS"

King *It wasn't always like this.
This life full of hatred and sorrow.
This fear of betrayal tomorrow.
It wasn't always like this.*

*I was the happiest child.
Each day full of playing and laughter,
I thought I'd be blessed ever after.
I was the happiest child.*

*I grew to be king,
Loving and wise:
I looked to the future,
With rose-tinted eyes.*

*She was the one I adored.
I'd discovered the love of my life,
All my subjects worshipped my wife,
She was the one I adored.*

*Loving the Queen made me blind,
But a woman's a woman and sees;
Waved her love away on a breeze.
Loving the Queen made me blind.*

*No more will I love,
Nor will I smile:
My life now is worthless,
My heart full of bile.*

[The music continues beneath the following ...]

Chorus For one thousand days,
Chorus The King married one thousand maidens,
Chorus And removed the heads of one thousand Queens.
Chorus King Shahryar trusted no one.
Chorus He saw no one except the Vizier. *(Another scroll is signed).*
Chorus His happiness had gone.
Chorus His heart that had once been so warm was now cold ...
Chorus ... as ice.

King *Now I've a heart made of steel.
Each day a new wife comes to my bed,
The following day, she will be dead.
Now I've a heart made of steel.*

*Women will never gain trust.
The flower of their love withers away,
Now none will last for more than one day.
Women will never gain trust.*

*Women are worthless,
Women are liars:
They seem to be roses,
But grow into briars.*

The King exits. MUSIC #3 continues under the following dialogue.

Scene 3 : Sheherazade's Wedding

Chorus The kingdom was plunged into darkness ...
Chorus ... grief ...
Chorus ... and fear.
Chorus The Vizier did everything he could to protect his two daughters, Sheherazade and Dinarzade, from the King.
Chorus Until one day, his elder daughter made his blood freeze.

Sheherazade approaches the Vizier. MUSIC #3 stops.

Sheherazade Father.
Vizier *(Startled)* Sheherazade, most precious daughter. You must not approach me in the palace. If the King sees you he will demand to marry you. You must leave at once.
Sheherazade If I leave the King will not see me. *(The Vizier appears relieved that she has understood).* But I want the King to see me. I want him to marry me.
Vizier *(Deeply shocked)* My daughter, have you lost your wits? To marry the King is certain death. I have worked tirelessly to protect you and Dinarzade.
Sheherazade I know, Father. But by marrying the King, I believe I can stop the killing.
Vizier *(Becoming angry)* Do you not think I haven't tried to stop the murderous tyrant? Is there anyone with more ability to persuade him than me? *(Sheherazade tries to speak)* No. I will hear no more. Now obey your father and return home.
Sheherazade Yes, my lord. *(She moves away).*
Chorus For seven days Sheherazade begged to marry the King.
Chorus For seven days the Vizier refused to listen.
Sheherazade *(Determined)* Father, since I asked you to allow me to marry the King, seven more wives have been executed. If you continue to deny me, the blood of this nation's maidens will be as much on your hands as on those of the King.
Vizier But you are my daughter. I cannot bear to let the King kill you.
Sheherazade I promise you, if my plan works he will not kill me. Nor will any other young woman be put to death.
Vizier *(After a long and agonised pause)* Sheherazade. I will arrange for your marriage to the King. But hear me when I say: if your plan fails not only will you die but so will all the joy left in my heart.

MUSIC #4 - "ARABIAN NIGHTS"

Exit Vizier. Sheherazade is prepared for the marriage. Eventually the chorus backs away and she is left alone with Dinarzade.

Dinarzade Oh, Sheherazade. This should be the happiest day for our family but it is the saddest. I will miss you so much. Never will I hear your laughing, your singing and your stories.
Sheherazade Dinarzade, beloved little sister. I think you will hear many more of my stories.
Dinarzade But...
Sheherazade Hush, hush, little one, no need for a tear
*So now dry your eyes and have no more fear.
The stories I tell you will find a new ear,
To marvel at them for many a year.*
*Tales of adventure and magic and wonder,
With heroes and villains and thieves who would plunder,
Fables with sandstorms and lightning and thunder,
Mysterious genies who tear skies asunder.*

Dinarzade *Nobody tells stories like you.
You tell them and they come alive.
Without you they will never survive.
Sheherazade, what can we do?
What can we do?*

Sheherazade *Have faith and the future is bright.
The King is only a man,
If all goes according to plan,
The tales will be told every night!*

*Legends of beasts with ten legs and four tails,
And giants and monsters and twenty foot snails,
Of urchins and sailors who never need sails.
The magic of stories and myths never fails.*

Both *Tales of adventure and magic and wonder,
With heroes and villains and thieves who would plunder,
Fables with sandstorms and lightning and thunder,
Mysterious genies who tear skies asunder.*

Sheherazade *By closing your eyes, you'll picture such sights:
Black darkness below, above blinding lights;
You'll be the great hero that wins all the fights.
See everything in the Arabian Nights.*

Both: *See everything in the Arabian Nights.*

After the song, the chorus and The Vizier move into familiar wedding positions while Sheherazade and Dinarzade remain apart from the rest,

MUSIC #5 - "THE KING'S WEDDING", REPRISÉ #2

As the music starts, Dinarzade is assisting her sister with the red veil.

Dinarzade *Sheherazade, what is your plan? How can you avoid the executioner?*
Sheherazade *Little sister, you must listen and do exactly as I tell you. (As she speaks, the King enters and waits for his next wife. Sheherazade whispers to Dinarzade who nods seriously and fearfully. The Vizier steps forward). I am ready father.*

All *She is beautiful and dutiful,
She is the perfect wife,
She's a pretty one, a witty one,
She'll give the King her life.*

Group I-III	<i>She'll give the King her life.</i>	Group IV	<i>Her life.</i>
Group I- II	<i>She'll give the King her life.</i>	Group III-IV	<i>Her life.</i>
Group I	<i>She'll give the King her life.</i>	Group II-IV	<i>Her life.</i>

All *Her life.*

Sheherazade is brought to the King who removes her veil.

King *Vizier, your daughter is a beauty. I do not wonder that you have kept her from me. (The Vizier bows and hides his face). No matter. Come Sheherazade, say farewell to your family.*
Sheherazade *(Embracing her father) Wish me joy and long life, Father.*
Vizier *Oh, Sheherazade, if only I ...*
Sheherazade *(Embracing Dinarzade) Dinarzade. (A meaningful look). I will see you in the morning.*
Dinarzade *(Tearfully uncertain) Yes, Sheherazade.*

The King takes Sheherazade away, the rest of the cast exit slowly.

MUSIC #5A - PROCESSION OF THE BED

When the stage is empty, the royal bed is brought on by four chorus members followed by the King and Sheherazade. The bed is placed, the four chorus members bow to the royal couple and exit. Sheherazade returns the bow, the King remains

unmoved. The King and Sheherazade lie on the bed as the lights and music take us from night to morning. The lights brighten, the King wakes and watches Sheherazade sleep. After a few moments she wakes.

Scene 4 : The First Morning

King So, Sheherazade. It is nearly time. The Swordsman has his scimitar sharpened.

Sheherazade Highness and husband. Before I die I have one request, if I may be so bold.

MUSIC #5B - BEFORE ALI BABA, UNDERSCORE

King Well, what is it?

Sheherazade I would like to spend my last minutes on earth with my dear sister Dinarzade. She will be a great comfort to me and I to her.

King Very well. She can come to us here, before you are taken. Where is she?

Sheherazade Sire, she has been waiting outside your chambers. If I may call her...?

King Hmm. How convenient. Well, bring her in.

Sheherazade *(Calling lightly)* Dinarzade.

Dinarzade *(Entering, she desperately embraces her sister. MUSIC #5B stops. Sheherazade nods at her to start her prepared speech)* Oh, sister. How we shall miss your radiant presence. Your laugh, your singing, your music. But more than anything I shall miss your wonderful and magical stories. Is there time for you to tell me one more story before you ... before ...

Sheherazade Majesty, may I be allowed to spend my last minutes indulging my sister with a story?

King Stories are a waste of time ... nothing more than pointless distractions. I will not allow such things to occur in my bedchamber!

Dinarzade But your majesty have mercy! This is the last time I will ever ...

King *(Angrily)* Silence, child! How dare you address your King in such a way! My word is final! *(Dinarzade collapses, sobbing into Sheherazade's arms. A long pause).* Women! Alright, very well, but just one ... and I will listen also, if I may be permitted.

Sheherazade Your desire, oh, Lord and Master, is my command. Come now Dinarzade, the King has agreed. We will hear your favourite. *(Pause).* I will tell the story of 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves'.

MUSIC #5C - THE STORY OF ALI BABA

As Sheherazade begins, the rest of the stage becomes brighter as the story unfolds and the characters, played by the chorus, appear.

Scene 5 : Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (Part One)

Sheherazade Many moons have crossed the sky since there were two brothers who lived on opposite sides of a Persian town. *(Kasim and Ali Baba appear from opposite sides of the stage).* One of them, Kasim Baba was wealthy after marrying Narina, the daughter of a rich merchant. His younger brother Ali Baba was a poor wood cutter who sold firewood. One morning, Ali Baba kissed his wife and said: "My darling I must take the donkey further a field to gather wood enough to make enough for us to eat this next month. I shall be gone for two days". *(During this, Raiyah enters and Ali Baba overlaps the speech and they and the rest of the characters take over the telling of the story).*

Ali Baba My darling I must take the donkey further a field to gather wood enough to make enough for us to eat this next month. I shall be gone for two days.

Raiyah Be careful, husband, for I have heard that there are wicked bandits in the forests beyond the plains. May Allah guard you and bring you safely home. *(One of the chorus has become a donkey).*

Sheherazade Ali Baba spent the day travelling before finding a remote spot to work in.

Ali Baba Well donkey, I don't think any wood has been cut here for many years, we'll find rich pickings here. But what is that dust cloud. It's coming this way. It's people riding, I can see them now - oh dear, they're a rough looking lot. I wouldn't want to get in their way. Quick donkey, shoo, run away out of sight, I'll climb this tree.

The donkey runs away. After a moment, the rest of the chorus enter as the thieves and stop in a big clump, they have sacks of valuables slung over their shoulders and make various rabble-like noises.

- Chief Thief** Silence you dogs. (*They fall silent*). This is the cliff. Stand back. Open Sesame! (*The side of the cliff opens, MUSIC #5D starts, and the thieves go through into the cave*). Leave the booty with all the rest and get out. (*They dump their goodies and go back through with the Chief last. He turns back to the cliff*). Close Sesame! (*The side of the cliff slides back into place. MUSIC #5D stops*). Right then you dogs. Who are we?
- Thieves:** We are the Feared and Famous Forty Thieves (*Lots of big baddie laughs*).
- Chief Thief** (*Picking a dim one*) How many are we?
- Dim Thief** (*Making calculating noises all involving the number '40'; the other thieves start to become bored and restless*) Um ... I think I've got it this time ... Is it forty? (*The other thieves roar with approving laughter*).
- Chief Thief** (*Picking a little one*) And what are we?
- Little Thief** Errm ... Thieves? (*The others laugh hugely at this schoolboy error*).
- Chief Thief** Tell him lads!
- Thieves** (*They surround Little Thief*) We are the maddest, baddest, most murderous marauders in all Arabia and we're evil.
- Chief Thief** And what makes us happiest?
- Thieves** Robbing people.
- Chief Thief** (*To the smallest of all the thieves*) And...?
- Tiny Thief** Giving them a good slapping! (*He slaps the Chief Thief who staggers around the stage. Tiny Thief is terrified, but then Chief Thief laughs and they all roar with laughter as the music starts*).

MUSIC #6 - "WE'RE THIEVES"

- Chief Thief** *We're thieves, we're thieves,
And proud of being criminal
There's nothing we won't nick
And our success is quite... phenomenal
We rob, we cheat,
And we've been known to kill 'n' all.
We can't explain the reason why,
We think it's just subliminal.*
- All Thieves** *Thieving is our livelihood,
Thieving is our pleasure,
No defence is any good
To keep us from your treasure!
So if you value what you've got,
You'd better have a care,
Or we'll sneak in and take the lot,
And leave your cupboards bare!*
- Chief Thief** *My dad, the cad,
An ugly brute, and warty,
Taught me all he knew about
The arts of being naughty.
Now I'm the boss,
I rule this gang of forty
And woe betide the thief that dares
To call his master 'Shorty'.*
- All Thieves** *Thieving is our livelihood,
Thieving is our pleasure,
No defence is any good
To keep us from your treasure!
So if you value what you've got,
You'd better have a care,
Or we'll sneak in and take the lot,
And leave your cupboards bare!*

*We're thieves, we're thieves,
For us this life is splendid
We've got a cave where we can leave
Our booty unattended,*

Small Group *Our password means
The loot is well defended,
For strangers getting in the cave,
A quick death is commended*

All Thieves *Thieving is our livelihood,
Thieving is our pleasure,
No defence is any good
To keep us from your treasure!
So if you value what you've got,
You'd better have a care,
Or we'll sneak in and take the lot,
And leave your cupboards bare!*

*We're thieves, we're thieves,
Our brains are all unstable,
We'll raid your house and steal the food
You've left upon the table.*

Small Group *(Poshly) Your gold, your cash
Your coats of fur and sable,
Our deeds are so notorious
One ought to write a fable.*

All Thieves *Thieving is our livelihood,
Thieving is our pleasure,
No defence is any good
To keep us from your treasure!
So if you value what you've got,
You'd better have a care,
Or we'll sneak in and take the lot,
And leave your cupboards bare!
Yes we'll sneak in and take the lot,
And leave your cupboards bare!
Ha!!!*

Chief Thief Right then my little brood of bad eggs, let's get out of here. We've got work to do! *(They start to leave and the Chief watches them go off. Tiny Thief is the last to go).*

Tiny Thief: So much to steal, so little time, eh Chief?

Chief Thief *(Clipping him round the ear) Shaddup! (They exit).*

Ali Baba *(Carefully coming out of his hiding place, the donkey also returns) Can I believe what I have seen? Should I tell the city guard about all this stolen treasure? (The donkey gives a derisive snort). No, you're quite right. This could be the end of my days of labouring. Now, how does this cave open? Ah, yes. Open Sesame! (MUSIC #6A starts. The cave opens, Ali Baba nervously walks in). Allah be praised for showing me such wonders. I shall never cut wood again. But I shall not be greedy, I will just take enough for my family to live in comfort. (He loads a couple of bags onto his donkey then turns back to the cave). Close Sesame. (The cave closes. MUSIC #6A stops). Right let's get home. (He and the donkey move away).*

Sheherazade Ali Baba raced home to share his good fortune with his wife. She was astonished to see him.

Raiyah *(As Ali Baba approaches) Ali Baba, what are you doing back here? You said you'd be gone for days. And why haven't you got any wood? How are we supposed to live without any firewood to sell?*

Ali Baba Have you finished oh, beloved?

Raiyah Don't you "beloved" me. I've got barely enough grain to last the week. What am I supposed to do to feed us? Well?

Ali Baba *(Takes out a gold coin and flicks it to her) Here, use this.*

- Raiyah** *(Catching it)* Huh! I won't buy much food with ... *(She notices it is gold and is speechless - for a short while at least)*. Oh! Oh, Ali Baba! Oh, Ali Baba, where ... Oh, Ali Baba where did ...
- Ali Baba** I saw a band of thieves go into their secret cave and when they'd gone I stole in and took some of their loot.
- Raiyah** But that's stealing.
- Ali Baba** Where do you think they got it in the first place? Can you steal from a thief?
- Raiyah** But surely they will notice their gold is missing.
- Ali Baba** There is so much they would not notice if I took ten times what I have taken. But I will only ever go to the magic cave when we need more. And we must not boast about our wealth, people will get suspicious, especially my brother Kasim and his shrewish wife.
- Raiyah** That is true. I will keep some and bury the rest but I must know how much I am hiding. I will borrow a measure and weigh our wealth. *(She leaves)*.
- Sheherazade** Raiyah went to see the home of Kasim Baba to borrow Narina's measure. Narina, a sour and greedy woman, was suspicious and decided to trick Raiyah.
- King** Typical woman. She even tricks her own kind. You're all the same.
- Sheherazade** Indeed so, oh great majesty. But, as you have demonstrated, no woman can outwit such a wise king.
- King** True. Well, continue with the story. What was the trick?

MUSIC #6B - UNDERSCORE

- Sheherazade** This evil woman, Kasim's wife, used wax to stick to whatever Raiyah was measuring. Imagine her astonishment and how jealous she became when she found a golden coin at the bottom of her measure. How had Ali Baba become so rich? She bullied her lazy husband and made him visit Ali Baba to find out. Kasim was in a bad mood when he arrived at Ali Baba's door. And there was another surprise in store. *(MUSIC #6B stops. Kasim is greeted on his arrival by Morgiana)*.
- Kasim:** *(Before Ali Baba can speak)* Now I don't want to hear all that "welcome brother to my humble abode" nonsense. It won't wash. Come on. Explain yourself. *(He finally notices Morgiana)*. Who are you?
- Morgiana** *(Very respectfully)* My name is Morgiana, most worshipful brother of my master.
- Kasim:** Your master? Now I know the world has turned upside down.
- Ali Baba** Brother. I do not know what you mean. But you are indeed welcome to ...
- Kasim:** Enough! How did you think you could keep it from me. You have somehow come into so much gold you need to measure rather than count it. You can't have sold that much firewood. Gold doesn't grow on trees. Ha, ha, ha. *(He laughs hugely at his own, rather pathetic joke)*.
- Ali Baba** It is true, Kasim, that Allah has smiled on me. I found a secret cave full of treasure stolen by a vicious band of thieves.
- Kasim:** Where is this cave?
- Ali Baba** It is far away. No one must know. I am sure the bandits would kill anyone who discovered their secret.
- Kasim:** I am your older brother. You can have no secrets from me. And if you don't tell me, I will tell everyone you have stolen this gold.
- Ali Baba** Very well, Kasim. I will show you the cave and its treasures. But you must agree not to take too much. If we are careful, the thieves will never notice that anything is missing.
- Kasim:** *(Crossly)* Agreed, agreed. Now show me this cave.

MUSIC #6C - UNDERSCORE

The brothers set off.

- Sheherazade** Once he saw treasures in such abundance, Kasim's greed overcame him and he decided to keep everything for himself. The very next day, he made his own way to the cave, prepared to load many donkeys with riches.
- Kasim:** *(Arriving at the cave. MUSIC #6C stops)* Hah! My poor brother. He'll never get anywhere. Me? I'm the clever one. I'll empty the cave and no one will be any the wiser but I will be so much the richer. Here we are. Open Sesame! *(MUSIC #6D starts. The cave opens. He steps inside)*. Close Sesame! *(It closes behind him but we can still hear him. MUSIC #6D stops)*. Oh, such riches, such marvels. Oh how clever I am. I shall take this and this and this and this and this. I can't carry any

more. I'll come back later for the rest. Now to get out of here. What's the password again? Open Celery! (*Nothing happens*). That's strange, it worked before. Open Celery! (*Nothing*). Oh, I can't remember. Open Treasury! Open Sensibly! Open Season! Oh what shall I do? (*We hear the distant sound of the thieves returning to their cave, singing their song as they enter*).

MUSIC #7 - "WE'RE THIEVES", REPRISE

All Thieves Thieving is our livelihood,
Thieving is our pleasure,
No defence is any good
To keep us from your treasure!
So if you value what you've got,
You'd better have a care,
Or we'll sneak in and take the lot,
And leave your cupboards bare!
Yes we'll sneak in and take the lot,
And leave your cupboards bare!

They all roar with laughter as they approach the cave.

Chief Thief Silence you dogs! Now stand back. Open Sesame!

MUSIC #7A starts. The cave opens, Kasim runs out and comes face to face with the Chief. He stops dead - there is a silence.

Kasim: Ah! (*It's important that this is NOT a scream*).

Chief Thief Lads!

The thieves slowly surround Kasim. They freeze as MUSIC #7A stops.

Scene 6 : Later the First Morning

King Well, go on. What happened! Tell me, worthless wife!

Sheherazade (*Standing*) Forgive me, oh mighty, just and majestic husband. It fills my heart with sorrow and dread but I must stop the story.

The characters in the story fade into their non-story positions and characters.

King How dare you decide what you must or must not do. Am I not your King?

Sheherazade Of course, Sire. My lord and master, full of munificence and wisdom. But the sun has risen and your kingdom needs you in the affairs of state that you and only you can manage. And I must prepare to make you a widower once again. You said yourself, the Swordsman is ready for my neck.

King Yes, yes. But I must know what happened to Ali Baba. Vizier! (*The Vizier enters, expecting the worst*). Ah, Vizier. Tell me, what happened to Ali Baba?

Vizier (*Bewildered and a little panicky*) Pardon, O great King Shahryar. I know of no such man. Is he a prisoner in your dungeons? Or perhaps a trader in the city?

King Fool! I am speaking of the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. What happened to Ali Baba and Kasim?

Vizier (*Utterly confused now and terrified*) Kasim?! I ... I ...

King You don't know the story?

Vizier Forgive me, oh Sultan of Sultans, I know it not.

MUSIC #8 - "ARABIAN NIGHTS", REPRISE #1

King Very well. Sheherazade, it seems I have no choice but to wait until tonight for you to complete the story. But if I discover this is some womanly trick to save your skin, my retribution will be great and terrible. (*To the Vizier*). Tell the executioner I will not be requiring his skill today.

The King sweeps out. Dinarzade and Sheherazade almost faint with relief and The Vizier, still confused, takes them in his arms.

Vizier Oh, my daughters. What has happened? How is it that Sheherazade is to live?

Sheherazade The magic of my stories has begun to cast its spell on the King. (*The Vizier makes a quizzical grunt and a confused, questioning face*).

Sheherazade *Tales of adventure and magic and wonder,
With heroes and villains and thieves who would plunder,*
Sheh & Dina *Fables with sandstorms and lightning and thunder,
Mysterious genies who tear skies asunder.*

King *(Off stage)* Vizier!! To work!
Vizier Coming, oh conscientious one! *(He hurries out).*
Chorus And so, Sheherazade was spared for at least a day.
Chorus She enjoyed her first full day as Queen but knew it could be her last.
Chorus Her life depended on her stories.

Scene 7 : Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves (Part Two)

The lighting has shown the journey from morning to evening.

King *(Entering and throwing himself on the bed)* Sheherazade.
Sheherazade Master. You appear to be weary.
King I have spent the day in a distraction. Now, I command you to complete the story of Ali Baba.
Sheherazade Of course, Highness. I beg your indulgence to allow my younger sister to join us for the end of the story.
King Very well, call her in.
Sheherazade *(Calling gently)* Dinarzade.
Dinarzade *(Entering)* I am here, sister.
King *(Dryly)* It seems you spend your life outside my chamber. No matter. Sheherazade, continue with the story of Ali Baba. *(They settle down for the story).*
Sheherazade Sire. *(MUSIC #8A starts. We see Ali Baba on his journey to the cave).* Kasim Baba had been missing for two days when his wife begged Ali Baba to find out where Kasim had gone. Ali Baba had a very good idea where his brother would be. And so he set off with his donkey and made his melancholy way to the cave that had promised such happiness but which had led to such heaviness in his heart.
Ali Baba *(Arriving at the cave. MUSIC #8A stops)* Oh, brother. If I thought history could be changed, I would pray to Allah that you would not be behind this secret door. But I am certain you are within. *(He pauses as he plucks up courage).* Open Sesame! *(MUSIC #8B starts. The cave opens and Ali Baba gasps at the sight of his brother at the entrance)* Oh, Kasim. As I feared, you are here. And here. And here. And ... Oh, Kasim. What have they done to you?! Even if it means they come after me, I shall take you home and give you a respectful burial. *(He picks up Kasim's remains, loads them on his donkey, carries the rest and leaves the cave).* Close Sesame! *(MUSIC #8B continues. The cave closes).* Now, donkey. Let us take our sad burden home. *(They trudge away and Ali Baba returns home where Raiyah and Morgiana are waiting. MUSIC #8B stops).* I have grave news. My brother has been murdered and cut into pieces.
Raiyah I always thought his greed would get the better of him.
Ali Baba No matter. We must give him a proper funeral.
Raiyah But we can't bury him like that. Everyone will know he has been murdered and ask questions and our secret will be revealed.
Morgiana Master. If I may suggest ...
Ali Baba Go on Morgiana, I know you to be wise and loyal.
Morgiana I know of a cobbler in the market. He is a man of great skill and could restore your brother to the way he used to look.
Ali Baba That is what we must do. Bring him here as soon as you can.
Raiyah But Ali, his tongue will wag.
Morgiana Permit me, Mistress, but I believe I can arrange things so that he will be ignorant of where he is taken and who he is working for.
Ali Baba Morgiana, you are wise indeed. Go now and bring this cobbler to us.

MUSIC #8C - MARKET SCENE

Morgiana exits and the scene changes to the market with stall holders calling out to sell their wares. Morgiana walks through the market until she finds a cobbler quietly working on some slippers. MUSIC #8C stops.

- Cobbler** *(Aware that he is being watched)* Good day, my pretty waif. Can I be of service, or are you simply admiring the skill of the greatest cobbler in all Arabia?
- Morgiana** Cobbler, I have indeed heard of your skill with needle and thread and my master has need of your services.
- Cobbler** Does he need his shoes repaired or new ones made?
- Morgiana** Neither. I cannot tell you what he needs.
- Cobbler** Then I cannot help him.
- Morgiana** I must ask you to come with me to his home, it is work of the utmost secrecy.
- Cobbler** Young lady, I cannot leave here. How can I sell shoes and work if I am not here?
- Morgiana** Perhaps this gold coin will answer your question.
- Cobbler** *(Without hesitation)* Lead on young lady. Take me to your master.
- Morgiana** My master does not wish to be known, and so I must ask you to wear a blindfold.
- Cobbler** This is an outrage *(Morgiana holds up another gold coin which he grabs)* ... and where is your blindfold.

MUSIC #8C - MARKET SCENE, REPRISÉ

Morgiana puts on the blindfold and leads the Cobbler through the streets until she reaches Ali Baba's home. MUSIC #8C stops.

- Ali Baba** Welcome, Cobbler. I have a grave task for you. My brother has met a hideous end. I wish you to sew him back together so that I may bury him properly. I will owe you an eternal debt of gratitude ...
- Cobbler** I can't feed my family on gratitude.
- Ali Baba** ... and, of course, a substantial amount of gold.
- Cobbler** Show me the body. *(MUSIC #8D starts. Morgiana leads the Cobbler to Kasim and removes the blindfold. He gasps).* And now a craftsman will repair the work of a butcher.
- Sheherazade** The Cobbler worked through the night. Ali Baba knew that the thieves would soon realise someone else knew of the cave. And so it was that the next day the robbers found that the body had been moved. The Chief of the gang vowed to discover who had been in the cave and to murder him and all his household. He travelled to the city and scoured the market. *(MUSIC #8D continues. The scene is now back at the market).*
- Cobbler** *(Aware that he is being watched. MUSIC #8D stops)* Good day, sir. Can I be of service, or are you simply admiring the skill of the greatest cobbler in all Arabia?
- Chief Thief** *(Acting very smarmy)* Surely no cobbler in all the world could match your skills.
- Cobbler** Indeed, oh perceptive Sir, it has been said. My renown is great and not just for the repair and making of shoes. I have made clothes for the wealthiest merchants and sails for the largest of ships. *(He leans in close).* Why only a few days ago, I was asked to sew a human body.
- Chief Thief** *(Very alert)* A human body?
- Cobbler** Yes sir, it was the victim of a brutal murder. The man ... *(he looks round to make sure he is not being overheard)* ... had been sliced into six pieces. But when I finished with him, you couldn't see the joins.
- Chief Thief** What a remarkable feat.
- Cobbler** Indeed, the feet, the hands and the ears as well ... all remarkable!
- Chief Thief** I would so like to see where this extraordinary event took place. I am a storyteller and this would make a marvellous tale.
- Cobbler** I don't know where it was. I was blindfolded when I was taken there ...
- Chief Thief** Would this gold coin help you to remember your journey.
- Cobbler** ... but I have extraordinarily good ears and a sensitive nose. Put a blindfold on me and I'll find the place again. *(MUSIC #8E starts. The Chief Thief puts a scarf round the Cobbler's face and they follow the same journey as before).* Here it is.
- Chief Thief** Thank you, Cobbler. It looks like my new story will have a happy ending ... for me. And you may be earning even more money in your strange new trade. *(He laughs nastily).*

- Cobbler** You what?
- Chief Thief** Don't concern yourself with my silliness. Here is more gold, now leave me. (*MUSIC #8F starts. He turns the Cobbler round several times then pushes him off. The Cobbler wanders away confused and still blindfolded*). I shall return with my men and we shall destroy this home and all within it. (*MUSIC #8F continues*).
- Sheherazade** That evil man went away, disguised himself as a merchant and gathered his men. And the next day he and his gang were waiting outside Ali Baba's home. Each thief had a large oil flagon.
- Chief Thief** Right, my brave and bloodthirsty bullies, into your pots. Remember when I give the signal you leap out and kill all in this house. Here comes our next victim.
- Tiny Thief** So much to steal, so little ... Ow!

The Chief Thief clips him round the ear and all the thieves get into their pots and out of sight as Ali Baba approaches the house. Use shapes or just simple lids that allow the audience to see the thief inside.

- Ali Baba** Good evening, traveller. That is a fine collection of flagons. Are you on your way to the market?
- Chief Thief** Aye, sir. I will set up stall tomorrow. But for now I am weary and in search of lodgings.
- Ali Baba** Look no further. Stay here tonight. My servant, Morgiana is the finest cook in the city. Please come with me.
- Chief Thief** Such generosity. May Allah grant that you get what you deserve. (*Aside*). A knife between the ribs.
- Ali Baba** Raiyah, Morgiana. This honourable merchant of oil will be staying with us tonight. Morgiana, make us a feast of the finest lamb.
- Chief Thief** Your generosity is boundless, you must let me pay for such hospitality.
- Raiyah** You are welcome, sir. It'll be a bit more if you want breakfast ...
- Ali Baba** (*Interrupting*) Sir, I am almost insulted that you should offer money. Perhaps you can pay for your lodgings with a story.
- Chief Thief** Indeed sir, I have many stories. (*They move away, leaving Morgiana alone*).
- Morgiana** Hmm. Now I need more oil. There's something odd about that man. He seems more oily than the contents of his flagons. Oh, wait. I'm sure he won't notice if I borrow a tiny amount of his oil. It is for his meal after all. (*She goes to one of the flagons and starts to move the lid*).
- Thief** Is it time? (*Morgiana leaps back in fright but gathers herself quickly*).
- Morgiana** (*In a very deep voice*) Not yet. (*Normal voice, to herself*). This must be a trap for Ali Baba. All these flagons have a hole in the lid. They must all have a man inside. Well, we'll soon see about that. (*Cheerfully*). I've got just enough hot oil for each of them. (*She pours oil into each flagon; the thieves inside are killed*). Now to check it's worked. (*She goes to the first lid*). It's time. (*There is no reply*). Good. I shall have to handle their chief as well. (*She goes back to the house just as Ali Baba, Raiyah and Chief Thief roar with laughter at the traveller's story*). Master, the feast will be ready very soon. Perhaps while he waits, your visitor would like some entertainment?
- Chief Thief** That would be a pleasure. Pray tell me, what is the entertainment?
- Morgiana** If it please, sir. I have some skill as a humble singer and dancer. I would be happy to perform for you.
- Chief Thief** Ali Baba. You are the luckiest of men to have such a servant. May we see her dance?
- Ali Baba** (*Slightly bewildered*) Of course. I had no idea Morgiana had so many talents.
- Raiyah** (*Slightly suspicious*) Nor had I. (*They sit to see the song and dance*).

MUSIC #9 - "DECEPTION"

Morgiana *Woman is full of deceit;
Using her weakness to woo.
Innocent men will fall at her feet,
While believing her lies to be true.*

*The wise man must watch every move of his wife,
For if he relaxes she will ruin his life.*

*Man lives a life that is clean,
Free from the burden of lies,
Look in his heart, his virtue is seen.
And to heaven his soul will arise.*

*Woman must honour and worship her master,
If she defies him she is courting disaster!*

Dance opportunity - during which Morgiana and the other dancers appear to be flirting with the Chief Thief. Raiyah won't be left out and joins in. Towards the end of the dance, Morgiana is dancing alone, reveals her knife and stabs the Chief Thief. There is a stunned silence.

Morgiana *(Slightly breathless)* Did you enjoy my song, Master?
Ali Baba Enjoy it? Enjoy it? You just murdered a man! Raiyah, quickly, fetch help while I hold this madwoman.
Morgiana Master. Mistress. Please. Before you condemn me, take a closer look at the man I have killed. For you will see he is no man, but a dog.
Ali Baba *(Moving closer to the Chief Thief and gingerly removing his disguise)* How can this be?
Raiyah Husband, what's the matter, who is it?
Ali Baba This is the head of the band of villains. The thieves who hide their treasure in the secret cave. This is the monster who murdered my brother. Morgiana, wisest of all women, you are right. This man is indeed a mangy dog.
Morgiana And his puppies are outside! He came to kill us all to keep the secret of the cave.
Ali Baba Now, thanks to your cleverness and bravery, we are the only remaining keepers of the secret.
Raiyah And all that is in the cave...?
Ali Baba Yes, beloved. All that is in the cave is ours. And Morgiana's of course.
Sheherazade *(MUSIC #9A starts)*. And so it was that Ali Baba and his Raiyah adopted Morgiana as their daughter and lived for many years in happiness and comfort. And nobody ever found out about the cave. As old age eventually took them to Paradise, the secret of the cave went with them. And as far as I know, the cave and all the treasures within have lain undisturbed from that day to this. *(MUSIC #9A stops)*.

Scene 8 : The Next Morning

The dialogue is continuous.

King Sheherazade. I have been most entertained with this story.
Sheherazade Highness and husband, if I have given a speck of pleasure with the tale, then I shall die happy.
King Good! For it is morning and die you must. My swordsman awaits in the courtyard and will be impatient to carry out the sentence upon you.
Sheherazade I am ready, Sire.
Dinarzade Oh ... I'd almost forgotten. Oh, Sheherazade.
Sheherazade Hush, little one. You must be brave and look after Father.
Dinarzade But, Sheherazade, aren't you afraid of dying?
Sheherazade Now, now. Death could be no more frightening than the genie found by the fisherman. *(Pause)*.
King What genie?
Sheherazade Pardon, Sire. It is nothing but a trifling story.
King Then I will hear it.
Sheherazade Alas, you shall hear it from another's lips. For the hour of my death has arrived.
King *(Angrily)* Do not dare to argue with me! Vizier! *(The Vizier enters)*. Lift your head, man. Go and tell the swordsman to return tomorrow morning at the same time.
Vizier It is a pleasure to obey your Royal will, Majesty. *(He starts to leave)*.
King I will hear this story tonight. Do not make me regret another reprieve.
Sheherazade Husband, if I were ever to cause you regret, you would have no need of a swordsman, for I would surely die of a broken heart.
King *(Unconvinced)* Hmmmm. *(He exits, following the Vizier)*.

MUSIC #9B starts. The lights change.

Chorus The Vizier dismissed the swordsman.
Chorus He was seen smiling for the first time in many days.
Chorus Word of Sheherazade's survival spread throughout the city.
Chorus People asked how it was that Sheherazade had saved herself.
Chorus Was she a powerful magician and what kind of spell had she cast upon the king?

Chorus Soon a host of stories was being told all over the city.

Chorus Sheherazade had cast her spell upon everybody.

Scene 9 : The Fisherman and the Genie

MUSIC #9B continues. Sheherazade is already in or on the bed, waiting for her husband. MUSIC #9B stops.

Vizier *(Entering with the King. He has an armful of scrolls)* ... and this one Majesty. *(The King signs, absently).* Thank you. And this one Majesty. *(It is signed)* And...

King No more, Vizier. That is enough for today. Now, be off with you! I have urgent personal business of my own. *(Playfully).* Go on, shoo! *(The Vizier backs off, bowing as he goes).* Come Sheherazade, I will hear this story of the Fisherman and the Genie. *(He settles down to listen).* Begin.

Sheherazade How many stars are in the sky? How many grains of sand are in the mighty Sahara?

King Are these serious questions?

Sheherazade *(Ignoring him)* ... and how many gallons of water are in the sea? Far too many stars, grains and gallons to count, and always moving. But it was at the edge of the largest and bluest of all the oceans that this story took place. *(MUSIC #9C starts).* A long time ago, there was a poor fisherman who was forlorn. He had not caught so much as the tiniest minnow for more than ten days and was beginning to despair. *(Lights change).*

Fisherman I will cast my net once more and if there is nothing in it, I shall give up fishing and go and beg on the streets of the village. *(He casts his net into the sea and begins to pull it in. The net and sea are created by various drapes in the hands of the Chorus).* Looks like I'd better find a bowl to beg with. *(Most of the net has been reeled in and is empty but in the last pull he realises he has actually caught something).* Wait a moment, there is something. It's not much of a fish. Doesn't seem to be interested in putting up a fight. *(He grabs his catch).* Huh! A lousy bottle. Well, I may not have any fish for supper, but at least I've got the wine to go with it. I'll have a quick taste. *(He breaks the seal and pulls out the cork and there is a rumbling. MUSIC #9D starts. Gradually from the bottle emerges a cloud that forms into an impressive and very angry genie).* Oh, my. That's some fish.

Genie *(Stretching)* Aaaaaaaahhhhhh! Freedom. At last. Oh great and merciful Suleiman, I give thanks and offer my everlasting service to you for freeing ... Wait a moment. You are not Suleiman.

Fisherman *(Laughing)* Hah! I have been called many things. But never have I been mistaken for Suleiman, the greatest of all prophets and kings.

Genie Are you his servant then, sent to release me?

Fisherman I am a humble fisherman. Who or what are you?

Genie I am a genie of great power. Was it you that released me from this hateful bottle?

Fisherman Indeed, O great and powerful genie. I suppose you will want to grant me a wish.

Genie You are right, you worm of mankind, I do owe you a favour.

Fisherman Well ... I'd like to be fabulously wealthy and could you make my wife a little prettier and ...

Genie *(Interrupting)* I will grant you the favour of choosing how to die.

Fisherman Pardon?

Genie How do you want to die, you pungent speck of humanity?

Fisherman Die? Me? I'm far too young to die. What are you talking about?

Genie I am going to kill you. How would you like me to do it?

Fisherman That's gratitude for you. I release you from a bottle and then you say you're going to kill me. At least tell me why.

Genie *(Calmly)* Because I am very angry.

Fisherman Well I'm not that happy about not catching any fish, but I can't go round killing people just because I'm a bit miffed, can I?

Genie I have been in that bottle for one thousand years.

Fisherman Oh, yes? And I'm the King of all Persia.

Genie SILENCE!!! I was a friend and loyal follower of the great Sulieman and I was his most powerful genie. But I became unhappy when he gave power to weaker genies than myself. So I decided it was time for him to go.

Fisherman You really have got quite a temper, haven't you?

Genie As you will find out very soon. I gathered an army to attack his palace.

Fisherman That must have been an almighty battle.

Genie It would have been but my army all ran away before it started and so I was left alone to be captured. If only I had apologised, the great king would have welcomed me back.

Fisherman Why didn't you then? (*Genie gives him a look*). Sorry. See? It's easy. (*Genie gives him another look*). Sorry. See I just did it twice ...

Genie Enough, you poor excuse for an ant of a human. My punishment was to be confined to the bottle and thrown into the sea. I vowed that whoever rescued me would have three wishes.

Fisherman That's what I ...

Genie For the first two hundred years, at least. Then for the next two hundred years I vowed that my saviour would be wealthy beyond his dreams. But then ... I got angry.

Fisherman Quite a slow fuse, you've got ...

Genie I then vowed that I would grant whoever rescued me the choice of how to be killed. And so, here you are.

Fisherman Phew! (*Sarcastically*). Well, Mr Genie, that's a fantastic story. (*Pause*). Complete fiction, of course.

Genie (*Absolutely livid*) What!!!! You doubt the word of the most powerful genie to grace the deserts?

Fisherman How do I know that wasn't just a fairy story you made up to frighten me? I mean, I've never met a genie before. I don't know what they look like. You might just be a big bloke claiming to be a genie.

Genie I am a genie, you insolent, insignificant, insect.

Fisherman Prove it.

Genie Prove it? What do you mean, prove it?

Fisherman If you want me to believe that you are a true genie, show me how you could possibly squeeze into that bottle. Then I'll be happy to let you kill me.

Genie Pah! A simple task. But, fisherman. Be warned, you have forfeit your right to choose how I kill you. When I have satisfied your disbelief, I shall decide how you will die.

Fisherman Fair enough. But hurry up before you bore me to death.

Genie (*Furiously*) Aaaaarrggghhh!!!! (*There is a thunderous rumble*).

MUSIC #9E starts. The Genie reverses the method of his appearance until he is back in the bottle. His screams of anger become muffled.

Fisherman (*Slamming the lid back on*) Aha! So much for the all-powerful, fisherman-killing genie. You have been beaten by the great Suleiman and now you've been outwitted by the most humble fisherman in the land. May you stay in this home of yours for another one thousand years.

MUSIC #9F starts.

Sheherazade And with that, the fisherman threw the bottle as far as he could, back into the ocean. He left a notice on the beach to warn all fisherman of the wicked and vengeful genie lurking in the salty depths. That notice still stands and no one has dared to open any bottles that have washed up on the beach.

Scene 10 : Sheherazade Sleeps

There is a long silence - the King is thoughtful, Sheherazade watches him.

Sheherazade I hope, my beloved Lord, that my paltry story has not offended you.

King (*Absently*) What ... Oh. No. I enjoyed it very much. It is amusing to see pomposity and arrogance brought down to earth. (*He still looks thoughtful*).

Sheherazade Indeed. (*Pause*). Forgive me, husband, but there are still a few hours before dawn and my execution. I am weary and with your permission will sleep awhile.

King Yes. Sleep. You will be woken when it is time.

MUSIC #10 - "SHEHERAZADE"

Sheherazade My Lord.

She sleeps. The King watches her. Throughout the song, he paces in his bedroom, obviously confused by his feelings for Sheherazade. The Chorus and Dinarzade, meanwhile show the fear, but also the hope, within the kingdom.

Soloist *Sheherazade, Sheherazade, our Queen,
The greatest story-teller there has been.
The nation holds its breath,
We pray you will cheat death,
And make your people happy and serene.*

More Voices *Sheherazade, Sheherazade, our Queen,
Your bravery inspires us all to dream.*

Many Voices *To dare believe at last,
Our fear of death will pass,
You'll free us from this terror so obscene.*

Soloist *We look to you, Sheherazade, our Queen.*

All Chorus *Sheherazade, Sheherazade, our Queen,

Your bravery inspires us all to dream,

To dare believe at last,

Our fear of death will pass,

You'll free us from this terror so obscene.

The King has closed his eyes,

And hearing only lies,
He cannot see the love that burns so bright,

Sheherazade, devoted wife.*

Soloist *Sheherazade, we pray to save your life.*

Dinarzade *Have faith and the future is bright.
The King is only a man,
If all goes according to plan,
The tales will be told every night...*

Chorus *Have faith and the future is bright
(Dinarzade Sheherazade, Sheherazade.)

The King is only a man.
(Dinarzade Sheherazade, Sheherazade.)*

King *What am I going to do?

You have confused my emotions

All the time

Thinking of nothing but you.

What am I going to do?
Sheherazade, Sheherazade, my wife,
You trick me every night to save your life.

Your words haunt me.

You tell me stories and I dream of you.

Sheherazade, deceitful wife.

But ...

Nobody tells stories like you.
You tell them and they come alive.
Without you, they will never survive.
Without you, they will never survive.
Sheherazade, what can I do?
Sheherazade, what can I do?*

Sheherazade, Sheherazade, my wife,

You trick me every night to save your life.

Chorus *A man that still believes
That women all deceive.*

Chorus & D'zade *A man who's closed his eyes and cannot see.*

Soloist *Sheherazade, we fear for you our Queen.*

Chorus *The King has closed his eyes
And hearing only lies
He cannot see the love that burns so bright.
Sheherazade, devoted wife.*

Soloist *Sheherazade, we pray to save your life.*

King *It must end.*

Treachery must be exposed.

Your execution will take place at dawn.

Your words haunt me.

You tell me stories and I dream of you.

Sheherazade, deceitful wife.

Sheherazade, it's time to end your life.

The King turns with sadness, but resolve, and leaves. The lights fade.

END OF ACT ONE

INTERVAL

ACT TWO

Scene 1 : Sheherazade Faces Execution

MUSIC #10A - OPENING

As the lights come up to show that we have reached the dawn, Sheherazade is sleeping as before. The Chorus are in the courtyard, trying to behave as normal but there is an atmosphere of anxious anticipation. The King enters with the Vizier. He looks at Sheherazade.

King *Vizier. Wake your daughter. She has delayed my Swordsman for too long.*

Vizier *Majesty. Your wish is my command. But may I ask why you have decided that her death must be today?*

King *I have been troubled, Vizier. I have enjoyed Sheherazade's stories. I believe she loves me and I must confess I have felt affection for her. That is what troubles me, Vizier. How can I risk loving her, knowing that she will betray me as I was betrayed before? I feel your pain, but it must be done. Now. (Pause). Vizier.*

Vizier *Pardon, O auspicious Lord. (Calling off). Swordsman. (He leans over to Sheherazade). Daughter. Sheherazade, my jewel, it is time to wake.*

Sheherazade *(Waking) Father? (The Swordsman enters). I understand. (To the King). Forgive me, my beloved husband. I see you have tired of my stories.*

King *(Hesitantly) Speak not of your stories. (To the Swordsman). Take her.*

MUSIC #10B - EXECUTION

They exit. The stage is alive with tension which increases as the Swordsman, Sheherazade, the Vizier and the King enter and start to take the same route as the previous wives. Dinarzade runs from the crowd and embraces Sheherazade.

Sheherazade Little sister. Isn't it a beautiful day. Lots of donkeys and cattle for sale.

Dinarzade *(Fighting back the tears)* Just like in that funny story of 'The Ass And His Ass'.

Sheherazade *(Laughing)* 'The Ass And His Ass'! I'd almost forgotten that story. Tell Father the story tonight. He will need cheering up.

MUSIC #10B continues. The procession begins to move on leaving Dinarzade. The King slows down, falling behind. Sheherazade is taken off. We hear the familiar doom-laden drum-roll ... a fanfare ... the music builds to a climax ... everyone holds their breath.

King Wait! *(MUSIC #10B stops. All eyes look at the King. Pause).* Bring her back. *(Sheherazade is brought back, the crowd parts as she is led to the King).* Sheherazade, you will remember this story of 'The Ass And His Ass' and tell me tonight.

Sheherazade But, most illustrious and wise Lord. I am to be executed. You wish my death this very day.

King *(Angry)* Silence! Until your head is removed from your body, you are my wife. And as my wife, you will obey me. Do you understand?

Sheherazade Of course, O divine Majesty.

King Now, go back to the palace. *(She exits).* Vizier, to work.

MUSIC #10C starts. They exit.

Chorus And so the King's Swordsman was left with nothing to do for yet another day.

Chorus All of the city was happy.

Swordsman Except the Swordsman.

Chorus In all the time Sheherazade had been telling the King her stories,

Chorus She had never been as close to death.

Chorus All day, she ...

All Chorus ... and all of the City,

Swordsman ... except the Swordsman,

Chorus ... thanked Allah for his mercy. *(MUSIC #10C continues).*

Chorus Once again, Sheherazade waited for her husband in his bed chamber, as the day transformed into night. *(Sheherazade is on the bed. The King enters in a better mood).*

Scene 2 : The Ass And His Ass

King Well, Sheherazade, I hope you learned your lesson this morning.

Sheherazade Yes, beloved Lord and Master. Let me be instantly killed if I ever argue with you about my execution.

King *(Chuckling)* Now you are teasing me. Come, tell me of this 'Ass And His Ass'.

Sheherazade Of course, O worshipful husband. *(MUSIC #10D starts).* It happened that many years ago, in the reign of your great grandfather, may his memory always be honoured, there was a poor farmer. One day, this foolish man went to the market to buy grain, leading his donkey as he walked.

MUSIC #11 - "THE STORY OF THE ASS AND HIS ASS"

Farmer *Come stupid donkey, walk quickly all the way.
Don't lag behind as usual, today is market day.
(Spoken) The weather's looking dodgy and I (sung) think it's going to rain,
And if you're slow we'll both get wet and that won't help the grain.*

Chorus *The farmer plodded on his journey but didn't realise
He'd caught the close attention of less than honest eyes.*

Robber 1 *(Spoken) I'll tell you what my friend, here's some money to be had.
I can't believe how good I feel, when my behaviour's bad.*

Robber 2 *(Spoken) This farmer's got no riches, your logic's all gone (sung) wonky.
(Spoken) The only thing this fellow's got is a scrawny little (sung) donkey.*

- Robber 1** *That's just what we will take from him in very little time,
He will not even know he's been the victim of a crime.*
- Robber 2** *(Confused) But ...*
- Robber 1** *(Interrupting) Just shut up and watch a master at work. (He creeps up behind the donkey and slips off his halter and puts it on himself) Now quickly lead the donkey away. I'll take care of this idiot peasant.*
- Robber 2** I'll take it to market and sell it.
- Farmer** I need a rest. I think I'll stop and have a drink of water. Whoa, donkey ... *(He turns and sees the robber where the donkey used to be).* But who are you? *(Melodramatic).* My donkey, he's been stolen!
- Robber 1** Master, Master, please be calm. I am your loyal ass.
- Farmer** Help me! Help me! Please! My donkey has changed into a man that talks and walks and ... Oh, this is too much! Help me!
- Robber 1** *(Slapping the Farmer) Shut up. (The Farmer is shocked into silence).* Now, are you going to listen to my story?
- Farmer** *(Mumbling but nodding) Mmmmm.*
- Robber 1** *I realise this must be most confusing
To find your friendly donkey standing by your side.*
- Robber 1** Could I have a drink of water, by the way? ... Thanks. *(He takes the bottle and puts it in his own bag without drinking).*
- Robber 1** *But really I'm a man who has been under a wicked spell,
Cast by the mother of my wife.*
- I was married to the laziest of women
She wouldn't lift a finger to clean the house.*
- Robber 1** Is that bread in your bag? May I have a bite? ... Thanks. *(He takes the bread and puts it in his own bag without eating).*
- Robber 1** *You see I had to make her see who was the boss,
But I didn't realise that I had made a big mistake.*
- Farmer** Lazy wife! Lazy wife? Pah! You don't know the half! The woman I've left at the farm doesn't know what a broom is! Here, I've got some dates, please, take what you like ...
- Robber 1** Thanks. *(He takes the dates and puts them in his own bag without eating).*
- Robber 1** *So naturally, I'd beat her and make her see my view,
But her mother's a magician and she changed me for a laugh.*
- Farmer** Changed you? I don't understand.
- Robber 1** *(Aside) You're even more stupid than you look.*
- Robber 1** *My wife was a waster, so one day I chased her,
And gave her a crack on the head.
I said that's a taster, I sat down and faced her,
She opened her mouth and she said:*
- "My mum can do curses; for you what is worse is,
She hated you right from the start.
When she's done her verses, the magic disperses,
And you'll end up pulling a cart!"*
- Robber 1** So, Master, here I am. You're loyal ass.
- Farmer** *(Disbelieving) Your mother-in-law changed you into a donkey?*
- Robber 1** And then you found me master. I hope I wasn't too expensive.
- Farmer** Quite the opposite. You were the cheapest in the market. A bit odd compared with most donkeys.
- Robber 1** *Well, what happens now? I suppose I'm still your slave.
But going home to see my wife and kiss her's what I crave.*

Farmer *I'll let you go back to your wife but only on condition:
Beat her not, it's most unkind, and her mother's a magician!*

[spoken] *Now, for what I've done to you for years I do apologise,*
[sung] *I've kicked your legs and beat your back, thrown sand into your eyes.*
[spoken] *But now that evil spell's worn off and* [sung] *you're a man once more*
[spoken] *Please take some cash,* [sung] *it's all I've got; I'm sorry, I'm so poor.*

The Farmer starts to take cash out of his bag but then the Robber politely relieves him of the bag and all its remaining contents.

Robber 1 Master, I don't know what to say. I shall praise you to my dying days.

Farmer That's alright. Now off you go ... Wait. Can I have my halter back, please?

Robber 1 Of course, although it would be a fine keepsake of my days as a donkey with the kindest owner.

Farmer Oh, very well. Off you go. *(The Robber runs off laughing)*. Cheerful chap. But then I suppose you would be if you've just changed back into a man.

The Farmer moves into the market and during the following he visits various chorus groupings who sing the relevant lines.

All Chorus *But still our stupid hero needed grain
He stopped and chatted to some friends and neighbours*

Chorus Solo *Who bought him wine when they heard his tale...*

Farmer Thanks. And I told everyone in the market what had happened.

Small Group: *His story was repeated again ...*

More Chorus *... and again ...*

All Chorus *... and again.*

*After telling tales and drinking wine all day
The farmer staggered 'round the marketplace*

Chorus Solo [Handing him a bag of grain] *Until he found and begged some grain ...*

Farmer Thanks.

Robbers 1&2 *As he turned and started home he saw the donkeys up for sale*

Chorus Solo *There was one he recognised; it made him loudly say ...*

Farmer [Beating the donkey about the head and body. Spoken] *You stupid man, you silly ass,*
[sung] *As soon as you're set free
You're up to your old tricks again
To make a fool of me.*
[spoken] *No wonder you're back here for sale,*
[sung] *The silliest of men,*

Farmer Listen everybody, whatever you do, don't buy this donkey! He beats his wife and one day he'll do exactly the same to you as he did to me. You'd be really stupid to buy him. I was! *(Pause)*.

Farmer *I'll never make the same mistake
I won't buy you again.*

The chorus laugh loudly and freeze as the music ends. The King is quietly laughing but trying not to show it. He could be crying.

Sheherazade *(After a cautious pause)* I hope, my beloved ruler and Lord, that my story has not upset you. Your eyes appear to be watering.

King *(Recovering and wiping his eyes)* Wife, you have amused me once more. But I wonder if a man could be so truly stupid as to be tricked in such a way.

Sheherazade It is, after all, only a story. There are as many stories of man's wit and heroism as there are of stupid men. I hope I may be given the opportunity to tell you many more.

King Do not presume, Sheherazade, that I have forgotten your execution.

Sheherazade Nor have I, Majesty.

MUSIC #12 - “ARABIAN NIGHTS”, REPRISE #2

King The fate of your stories, and your neck, lies with me. Now I have matters of state to attend to. We will see about more stories tonight.

Sheherazade Legends of beasts with ten legs and four tails,
And giants and monsters and twenty foot snails,
Of urchins and sailors who never need sails.
The magic of stories and myths never fails.

[The underscore continues].

Chorus For many nights, the stories continued.

Chorus Tales of magic,

Chorus Wickedness,

Chorus Bravery,

Chorus Strange creatures,

Chorus Strange lands,

Chorus Villainy

Chorus And goodness.

Chorus More than a year passed...

Scene 3 : The Little Beggar

Lights up on the bedroom where Sheherazade and Dinarzade are happily chatting and giggling. The King enters looking like thunder. There is a silence.

Sheherazade Dearest and most noble Shahryar, what darkens your mood so?

King Oh, wife. You have no idea of the travails of ruling. I have seen a host of idiots today pleading with me to make a ruling about which of them owns a wild goat! I love my country and all my subjects but these people are fools! Who cares?

Sheherazade But husband, for those people the goat is of great importance.

King *(After a pause)* You are right. But it is infuriating to listen to their tittle-tattle.

Sheherazade Perhaps, beloved, I could tell you a story to take your mind away from such trivialities.

Dinarzade Sister, the story of ‘The Little Beggar’ may be appropriate. It involved, after all, a dispute about responsibility.

King Are there goats?

Sheherazade Not one, Highness.

King Then begin.

MUSIC #12A - THE STORY OF THE LITTLE BEGGAR

Sheherazade In an ancient town, full of ancient buildings, ancient traditions and, indeed, many ancient people, but no goats, there lived a beggar. The town was full of beggars, as so many are. But this beggar was well-known in the town for two reasons.

Dinarzade He was very small and very funny.

MUSIC #12A stops abruptly.

King *(Indulgently)* Is my sister-in-law telling this story, or my wife?

Sheherazade With permission, indulgent and beloved Emir, both of us.

King Very well. If it adds to the entertainment.

Sheherazade You are the most generous and ...

King Alright Sheherazade, I've said yes. Now get on with the story.

MUSIC #12A starts again.

Sheherazade Because of his size and his sharp wit and his ability to tell many funny stories, this Little Beggar was a frequent guest in the best houses of the town. One evening, the town's Tailor had invited the Little Beggar to visit him and his Wife.

Dinarzade During the meal, the Little Beggar told many funny stories, and the Tailor and his Wife almost ached with laughter ...

Lights fade to the stage where the Little Beggar and the Tailor and his Wife are seated for dinner, they are laughing. **MUSIC #12A** fades.

Little Beggar And so the porcupine said to the large grey fish; "I have more spines on my back than you've had sticklebacks for dinner".

The three of them dissolve into fits of laughter and gradually get their breath back.

Tailor You are a funny Little Beggar. I am quite worn out with laughter.

Tailor's Wife Come now, let us finish the fish ... The large grey fish!

They all scream with laughter. The Little Beggar takes a mouthful and swallows without chewing properly. He starts to choke on a bone caught in his throat. He goes into a comical fit and drops down dead at the feet of his hosts. They think he has branched out into physical comedy and are hysterical still. Eventually the joke starts to wear thin and they slowly stop laughing and become embarrassed that the Little Beggar has not realised that the joke is over. He still does not move and they become worried.

Tailor Beggar? Beggar?

Tailor's Wife *(Looking closely)* Oh. He's dead. You've killed him.

Tailor I killed him! You decided to have fish for supper. You killed him!

Tailor's Wife Husband. We mustn't argue. The Little Beggar is dead and he died in our house. Think of the disgrace.

Tailor Think of the blood money any relatives will demand.

Tailor's Wife We must do something.

Tailor: We must hide him. Wrap him up and we'll pretend he's our child. *(They find a blanket and wrap the Little Beggar in it. They pick him up and start moving through the town).* Help us, please. Our son has smallpox, please help.

MUSIC #12B - UNDERSCORE #1

Naturally enough everyone steps back.

Sheherazade The townsfolk were terrified of catching smallpox and no one offered to help.

Dinarzade The Tailor and his Wife were about to reach the edge of the town where they could leave the body...

Tailor Help us, our son has smallpox, we need a doctor.

A servant stops. MUSIC #12B stops.

Servant Sir, madam. My master is a doctor. He will help your son. *(The Tailor and his Wife stop in their tracks and are horrified).* Quickly, follow me, I will take you to my master. *(They have no choice, so they follow. MUSIC #12B continues).* My master lives here. *(MUSIC #12B stops).* Wait here outside his door and I will wake him. He lives at the top of these stairs. *(She goes up the 'stairs' and out of sight).*

Tailor's Wife Quick, husband. Leave him at the top of the stairs and let us get away before we are recognised.

Tailor But we can't just...

Tailor's Wife Do you want to hang for the death of a beggar?!

Tailor No, let's go. May Allah forgive us.

They leave the Little Beggar 'leaning' at the top of the 'stairs' and exit quickly.

Doctor *(Off stage)* What did you say? A child with smallpox. I shall come at once. *(He rushes out of the door and bumps into the Little Beggar, knocking him down the stairs in a tumble. The Little Beggar lies still where he lands).* Ow, what the ... Oh, Allah. What have I done? I've killed him!

Servant *(Following the doctor outside)* What has happened, what have you done?

Doctor Why, it's the Little Beggar. He must have been sheltering at my door, hoping for a bed for the night.

Servant And you've knocked him down the stairs and killed him? That won't do your reputation for keeping people healthy much good, will it?

Doctor But it was an accident. I was rushing to help a patient. *(He looks around).* Luckily the patient seems to have gone. That might have been awkward.

Servant If the Little Beggar has relatives, they will demand blood-money.

Doctor I can't afford that.

Servant We must hide the body. Let's throw it into the Cook's food store where the rats come every night for free food. With luck they'll eat the evidence of your mishap.

Doctor Quickly, chuck him over the balcony. *(They throw the body over the "balcony" where it lands in a kneeling position).* Now get inside and pray to Allah that we will remain undiscovered.

Servant We? It was nothing to do with ...

MUSIC #12C starts.

Doctor *(Interrupting)* Inside, and shut up.

They exit, just as the Cook arrives. MUSIC #12C continues.

Cook Right. Now for once and for all, I am going to finish those rats and their thieving ways. *(She creeps closer to the Little Beggar).* Quietly does it. *(She leaps forward and whacks the Little Beggar with her club).* Take that you thieving verminous scum. *(The Little Beggar topples over and lies still).* Wait a moment. That's no rat. That's a person. Well we'll see about that, Come on, get up and show me your face. *(She realises the Little Beggar is dead).* Oh, Allah, forgive me. I don't know my own strength. Who is this unfortunate creature? It is the Little Beggar. *(During the following she rhythmically wallops the Little Beggar).* Why did you try and steal food when I would have happily given it to you for nothing but a small joke. Now your relatives will demand blood money and I'm too poor to pay so I'll be hanged for murder. I'll throw you in the river then everyone will think you drowned.

MUSIC #12D starts. The Cook picks up the body and starts to walk through the town. She hears someone coming. She stands the body up and it balances on its own. Seeing this, the Cook runs off leaving the Little Beggar standing there. The passer-by is a slave who is very drunk. MUSIC #12D stops.

Slave Hassid *(Drunk and punchy)* I'll have anyone in this town, I will. I'm Hassid the slave and I may not have my freedom but I've got two good fists, I have. No one's as tough as me. Come on then, let's have you. I'll take five at a time, me! *(As he says this he brushes the Little Beggar who he hasn't seen. He thinks he is being attacked and gets hysterical).* HEEEEELP! Murder. Help me anyone. I'm being mugged, I'm being robbed, I'm being murdered. Heeeellp! *(As he screams, he has unwittingly grabbed the Little Beggar and is steadily shaking him or bashing him on the floor, obviously with no resistance).* Please don't kill me. Help, murder, help! *(Eventually, his noise attracts a crowd who pull him away from the Little Beggar who flops to the floor. There is a brief silence. Slightly more soberly).* I told you I could take anyone! Even a murderer. See?

Guard Murderer? Look closer, drunken fool. This is the Little Beggar. Everyone in this town knows he doesn't have a violent bone in his body. And you've killed him. You are under arrest for the murder of the Little Beggar. *(MUSIC #12E starts).* You will be tried in the courtyard tomorrow and may Allah have mercy on your worthless soul, although I wouldn't bank on it.

MUSIC #12E continues. The Slave is dragged off amid much jeering from the crowd, some of whom pick up the body of the unfortunate Little Beggar.

Sheherazade Very few people slept that eventful night. All the talk was of the death of the Little Beggar and how everyone in the town would miss his stories. *(MUSIC #12C stops).*

King *(Ironically)* Losing the source of many stories would indeed be a tragedy.

A look between Sheherazade and the King takes place.

Dinarzade *(Breaking the moment)* The following morning the local judge called for the prisoner to be brought forward.

MUSIC #13 - "I KILLED THE LITTLE BEGGAR!"

Judge *All people of the town take heed
The trial of the slave, Hassid
For murder, such a gruesome deed.
Bring me the prisoner with all speed.*

[Hassid is brought to the Judge]

Judge Now Hassid, you weed. How d'you plead?

Slave Hassid *Sir, I killed the Little Beggar in the night.
I must admit I'd had a drink or two.
He leapt at me and gave me such a fright,
I ask you sir, what could a body do.*

*I beg forgiveness for my crime,
It was an accident of fate.
To hang a fellow in his prime
Would be, for me, unfortunate!*

Chorus *Unfortunate.
Would be for him/me unfortunate!*

Judge *You are an evil little worm.
You are not worth a prison term.
Sentence of death I now confirm.
With neck inside a noose you'll squirm.*

Judge May Allah's mercy go with you. (*A noose is put around the slave's neck*).

Chorus [Chanting] *Execution,
Execution,
Execution ...*

Before the execution can happen the Cook runs forward.

Cook Wait!

Judge What is the meaning of this outrage?

Cook You mustn't kill this innocent slave. I am responsible for the death of the Little Beggar.

Judge: Explain yourself.

Cook *Sir, I killed the Little Beggar with my club.
I thought he was a dirty thieving rat.
He was crouching in the place I store my grub.
I crept behind and hit him with a splat.*

*I beg forgiveness for that blow;
It was an accident of strength.
To 'scape the noose I'd have you know,
I'd go to almost any length.*

Chorus *To any length.
She'd/I'd go to almost any length.*

Judge *I'll not forgive you, oafish lout.
Release the slave and throw him out.
For aiming such a vicious clout,
You should hang well, you're very stout*

Judge May Allah's mercy go with you. (*A noose is put around the Cook's neck*).

Chorus [Chanting] *Execution,
Execution,
Execution ...*

Before the execution can happen, the Doctor and his Servant run forward.

Doctor Wait!

Judge Not again! What do you want?

Doctor You mustn't kill this innocent Cook. We are responsible for the death of the Little Beggar.

Servant What do you mean we ...

Doctor Be quiet!

Judge Explain yourself.

Doctor *Sir, we killed the little beggar with a door.*

Servant *We means him, I wasn't even there!*

Doctor *The man was at my home for he was poor,
And knew that at my house he'd get good care.*

Both *We beg forgiveness for that fall,*

Servant *It was an accident of height.*

Both *If only he had been more tall,
His injuries would be more slight.*

Chorus *Would be more slight.
His injuries would be more slight.*

Judge *To blame the corpse for being short.
You have a total lack of thought.
The pair of you insult my court.
You'll both swing till your necks are taut.*

Judge May Allah's mercy go with you. *(A noose is put around their necks).*

Chorus [Chanting] *Execution,
Execution,
Execution ...*

Before the execution can happen the Tailor and his Wife run forward.

Tailor Wait!

Judge I don't believe it! Don't tell me. I mustn't kill this innocent Doctor and his Servant because you are responsible for the death of the Little Beggar.

Tailor *(Slightly embarrassed)* Well, um, yes, actually.

Judge Explain yourself.

Tailor *Sir, we killed the little beggar with a fish.*

[Optional] **Chorus** *A fish?*

Tailor's Wife *He told us tales, all night we laughed and joked.
I then presented him my favourite dish.*

Tailor *He took a mouthful, chewed it once and choked*

Both *We beg forgiveness for that bone,*

Tailor's Wife *It was an accident of food.*

Both *All fish have bones, he should have known;
The way he scoffed was very rude.*

Chorus *Was very rude.
The way he scoffed was very rude.*

Judge *You dare to blame the way he ate!
You're just the type of hosts I hate.*

[Optional] **Group** [spoken] *Me too!*

*I'll show no mercy; just you wait.
Your lives I will exterminate!*

Judge May Allah's mercy go with you. *(A noose is put around their necks).*

Chorus [Chanting] *Execution,
Execution,
Execution ...*

Before the execution can happen the Doctor runs forward.

Doctor Wait!

Judge WHAT! You've already had your turn.

Doctor I am sorry, my Lord but no one has murdered the Little Beggar. He's still alive!

Judge He looks pretty dead to me.

The Doctor sprinkles some pepper or holds a bottle of smelling salts to the Little Beggar's nose. He sneezes hugely and coughs up a huge fish bone which he holds up to the gasping crowd. He looks a bit confused.

Little Beggar Good morning friends. Have I missed something?

Arabian Nights

Judge I should string the lot of you up.
Little Beggar Pardon me, oh eagle of legal worth. I appear to have caused some stir. But I cannot think what I could have done to anger you. I've had the strangest dream that I was about to tell a story. But before I could start, I choked on a bone ...
Tailor & Wife Er ... sorry.
Little Beggar ... then fell down some stairs and got thrown into a pile of food ...
Dr & Servant It was an accident!
Little Beggar ... then hit on the back of the head with a club ...
Cook: I thought you were a rat ...
Little Beggar ... and finally got bashed against a wall.
Slave I thought you were ... I was very drunk. Sorry.

Music #13 continues.

Little Beggar I'd be happy to repay all your inconveniences by telling a story that would amuse, if only I could remember which one I was about to start.
Tailor: It was about a chap called Sinbad who went on a marvellous journey.
Little Beggar: Ah! Sinbad. One of the best stories ever told.

Chorus *No one killed the little beggar on that night.
He lived to tell a merry joke or two. Ha ha!
And though he still ate fish with just one bite,
He learned it's always safer when you chew.*

During the applause, the chorus drift into the background and the focus switches to the King's chamber.

S'zade & D'zade *We beg forgiveness for that tale
It was an accident of course.*

Sheherazade *The Sinbad story I'll regale,
A legend of power and force.*

King *Tomorrow you will bring to life,
The tale of Sinbad and his strife.
Once more you cheat the swordsman's knife,
My beautiful and clever wife.*

The King exits, almost surprised at what he has just said, but not upset. MUSIC #13 continues into next scene

... in this Preview Script, the remainder of the play has been deleted ...

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