Dedication

This play is dedicated to my mother, who was the keeper of the tales when I was a little boy—especially on wet, rainy afternoons.
**KEEPER OF THE TALES**

Stories from 1001 Arabian Nights

By TIM WRIGHT

CAST OF CHARACTERS

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<td>ANJUM</td>
<td>his daughter</td>
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<td>EMINA</td>
<td>his other daughter</td>
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<td>LELIA</td>
<td>yet another daughter</td>
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<tr>
<td>GENIE</td>
<td>bottled up for years, evil</td>
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CASSIM: carpet weaver

MORIGANA: his sarcastic wife

SEEMA: their spoiled, beautiful daughter

HAROUN AL RASHID: shady looking character

GHASSAN COGIA: his strange and dirty pal
SETTING

Time: Many moons ago.
Place: An open-air bazaar in a country far away, and places in the imagination of a blind storyteller.

The show can be produced as lavishly or as simply as possible. A backdrop representing the bazaar can be hung with one or two stands erected for the sellers UP CENTER (including a rug stand for the final story). KAMAL'S area is UP LEFT, where he sits on a large rug with a tray beside him for coins. When the stories are told, KAMAL, AISHA and the PRINCESS freeze in their positions while the actors play out the scenes in isolated light DOWN CENTER. The homes of JABIR and YASIN are presented very impressionistically, with minimal props brought on and off during blackouts. A large (cardboard) rock is brought on for "The Donkey Driver and the Two Thieves." The seashore in "The Fisherman and the Genie" is represented by the family holding a fishing net and rocking back and forth to give the effect of the tide coming in and out.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

Scene One: At the bazaar, early afternoon.
Scene Two: The home of Jabir in "The Husband and the Parrot."
Scene Three: Back at the bazaar, an hour later.
Scene Four: The home of Yasin and the marketplace in "The Devoted Israelite."
Scene Five: The bazaar, a little later in the day.
Scene Six: A deserted road that leads to the bazaar, "The Donkey Driver and the Two Thieves."

ACT TWO

Scene One: The bazaar, later in the afternoon.
Scene Two: The seashore in "The Fisherman and the Genie."
Scene Three: The bazaar, late afternoon.
Scene Four: The rug stand at the bazaar in "The Carpet Weaver's Magic Tale."
Scene Five: The bazaar, closing time.

The play may be performed with or without an intermission. Action should be continuous between scenes.
KEEPER OF THE TALES

ACT ONE
Scene One

1 The STAGE is DARK. ARABIAN MUSIC PLAYS softly. A PIN-SPOT reveals KAMAL, a blind beggar, sitting on a large rug.

KAMAL: (Speaks to AUDIENCE as MUSIC CONTINUES.) Welcome, my friends, to the bazaar—where just about anything on Earth can be found. From great riches, beautiful colors and unimaginable joy to heavy sorrow, gray tomorrows and never-ending grief. All are available from the merchants here. For this is the bazaar, where everyone may be king or queen for a day, while only a few paupers fully realize that possessions do not make for life ever lasting. And you—you are invited to join us for as long as you like. Look around. See. Experience. Feel. Discover what your heart truly desires... or what your inner soul secretly fears. Perhaps, they are one in the same. Welcome, my friends! To the bazaar!

(I LIGHTS UP on the marketplace. There may be SELLERS and CUSTOMERS milling about in the background, if desired.) I am Kamal, the blind beggar. I live here at the bazaar. I have no other home, no material possessions, nothing I may hold in my palm to offer except for the riches I see inside my mind. I am a keeper of tales. A caretaker of legends. I sell thoughts, fables... to those weary and lost souls who seem to find their way to me when they most need to. And I will present them with what I feel they most lack—even if they are unaware of just what it is they need. I sell them nothing more, nothing less. (PRINCESS and AISHA ENTER. PRINCESS is obviously a handful, and AISHA is quite nervous.)

AISHA: Please, my princess, we must finish here. Your father, the caliph, commands us back to the palace grounds before the sun is in the center of the sky.

PRINCESS: I do not care! I hate it there! I have no friends! No one to talk to! At least here in the bazaar, it is exciting! Beautiful! I feel alive!

AISHA: But the shah will call upon your palace in a matter of hours! We must leave now. Besides, you have seen everything these merchants have to offer, many times over.

PRINCESS: (Notices KAMAL sitting silently.) That is not true, Aisha. I have never seen this man before. He seems quite interesting.

AISHA: Stay away from beggars, Princess. You have been taught about the untouchables.
PRINCESS: (ignores AISHA’S warning.) You, Blind man. Are you a beggar? An untouchable, as my servant has warned?

KAMAL: If one has a precious item to trade for gold, does that make him a beggar?

PRINCESS: But I see nothing here. Perhaps you have been robbed.

KAMAL: Oh, no. That, Princess, is impossible. I see that my vast riches are securely about me.

PRINCESS: See?! How may you see?! And where are these “vast riches”? What is it you sell, blind man?

KAMAL: Stories. For each piece of gold, I will tell you a tale which only your ears should hear at this time. A fable you must know for yourself. I will give to you great colors, sounds and music.

PRINCESS: (Laughs.) Great colors?! From a pauper who cannot see the difference between yellow and blue?

KAMAL: I see with my heart. With my soul.

AISHA: Please, Princess—we must take haste.

PRINCESS: This beggar intrigues me, Aisha. Perhaps he does know the truth.

AISHA: (In a hurry to leave, she obviously lies to the PRINCESS.) Do not be so naïve, child! He knows no stories, no fables. He is a great master of fakery. Why, I paid this very man three pieces of gold last harvest, and he only laughed at me and said the tale I needed to learn was “Don’t trust beggars in the bazaar”!

PRINCESS: Is this true? He knows nothing?

AISHA: (Tries to usher PRINCESS home.) Yes! Yes! Every word! Now, we must—

KAMAL: Be careful of whom you choose to believe, younger one—for the truth could be right under your nose all the time, and you would never know.

PRINCESS: Just what do you mean, great fakery-master?

KAMAL: There is a story which has been told for many years in this bazaar. The tale of the “Husband and the Parrot.” I knew the man well… and the parrot, for that matter. You see, young Princess, this man, whose name was Jabir, married quite a beauty by the name of Amina. (LIGHTS COME UP on another area as AMINA ENTERS with her THREE SERVANTS—TUFAIL, AKBAR and ALI. LIGHTS begin to FADE OUT on KAMAL as he continues to speak.) Jabir worshipped the ground Amina walked on and bought her many fine and expensive gifts. Although the presents were lavish and expensive, they were not the items Amina would have bought for herself. So, she began selling the pieces to buy what suited her own tastes.
Soon, Jabir became distressed when he noticed many of the gifts he bestowed upon his wife were gone. In order to keep it a secret, Amina instructed her servants to lie. (STAGE is DARK.)

End of Scene One

ACT ONE
Scene Two
“The Husband and the Parrot”

LIGHTS UP: On the home of JABIR (can be a bare stage). AMINA, JABIR’S wife, is in silent conversation with her servants, TUFAIL, AKBAR and ALL. KAMAL, PRINCES and AISHA are FROZEN UP LEFT.

JABIR’S VOICE: (From OFF RIGHT.) Amina, my lovely bride! I am home and have just this moment returned from the bazaar!

AMINA: (Whispers to the SERVANTS.) Shh. It is him! Remember—tell Jabir nothing. Nothing!

JABIR: (ENTERS RIGHT carrying two large brass vessels. Joyful.) Amina, gaze upon these beautiful vessels! Pure brass. Worth a fortune, and yet not worthy of the beauty in your eyes. (AMINA forces a smile, but does not like the gift. JABIR beams.) Do not let their magnificence rob you of words. Why, I feel they are far more impressive than the rug I purchased yester—

(Looks around the house and suddenly stops.) The rug, Amina.

AMINA: (She and the SERVANTS are nervous.) What about the rug, dear husband?

JABIR: Where is it?

AMINA: (Very nervous.) Jewel? Trinket, husband. Merely a trinket.

JABIR: (Suspicious.) It is worth a king’s fortune!

AMINA: (Confused.) Nay, husband, it cannot be, for I have been in the house the live long day.

JABIR: Then, where— (Becomes distracted upon seeing the jewel around AMINA’S neck.) This is very intriguing, my wife. Where did you discover this jewel?

AMINA: (Very nervous.) Jewel? Trinket, husband. Merely a trinket.

JABIR: (Suspicious.) It is worth a king’s fortune!

AMINA: And, I would not expect any less, my love. This was a gift from you last autumn. Do you not recall?

JABIR: (Confused.) It was? (Pause. Thinks.) So it was. I think. I am so upset, I cannot think straight. Hold it close to you, and do not
allow that to disappear. (Notices the SERVANTS are very nervous.) Servants! Come to attention! Tufail?

TUFAIL: Yes, Master?

JABIR: Did you sell the rug today, which I gave my wife yesterday?

TUFAIL: (Looks over to AMINA, who is standing behind JABIR. She signals TUFAIL to say "No.") Nay, Master, it cannot be for I have been in the house the live long day. Abar? (AMINA signals AKBAR as well.)

AKBAR: Nay, Master, it cannot be, for I have been in the house the live long day.

JABIR: Ali?

ALI: (Looks to AMINA, and she gives the same instruction;) Nay, master, it can not be for—

JABIR/ALI: (In unison,) —I have been in the house the live long day.

JABIR: Yes, yes! I know, I know! Now, that will be enough! From all of you! There has been a thief among us for many seasons now. But, soon, we will discover the truth, for I purchased one other item at the bazaar as well. (EXITS RIGHT, and AMINA is worried. ENTERS RIGHT with ZANUBA, the parrot. (See PRODUCTION NOTES for costuming ideas.))

AMINA: What a pretty she-parrot. It will make a wonderful pet.

JABIR: This bird is not a pet, but is my eyes when I am not home. She will see all in my absence, and tell all to me upon my return. Soon, the identity of the petty thief who shares unlawfully in my blessings will be revealed—by this parrot. (EXITS RIGHT, confident. AMINA and the SERVANTS stare at ZANUBA.)

ZANUBA: (Stares back.) Zanuba wants a pita cracker.

AMINA: (Thinks.) Tufail—tomorrow you are to place a coffee grinder under the parrot. Akbar—you are to sprinkle the bird with water. And, Ali—at the same time, you are to run circles around this bird while flashing a mirror into its eyes. Do you all understand?

SERVANTS: (In unison.) Yes, my lady.

ZANUBA: Zanuba still wants a pita cracker!

AMINA: Be still, you ugly bird! (LIGHTS OUT. In the darkness, KAMAL continues his tale.)

KAMAL’S VOICE: And so, when the sun disappeared and the moon was high in the sky, all in the mansion, including the parrot, slept well. The following day, the servants did what Amina had told them to do, even though it seemed to be a strange order. (LIGHTS COME UP to reveal the SERVANTS standing around ZANUBA. TUFAIL is busy grinding a very noisy coffee grinder below ZANUBA. AKBAR is flicking water on the ZANUBA from a bowl. ALI runs around ZANUBA flashing...
the mirror in her eyes. Poor ZANUBA is screaming and hopping about in fright. In the background AMINA can be seen, gleefully putting the brass vessels in a large sack. LIGHTS GO DOWN. KAMAL continues in the darkness. AMINA and SERVANTS EXIT LEFT.) Tufail, Akbar and Ali tormented the parrot in this fashion for the better part of the day as Amina once again sold many treasures her husband had given her. When Jabir returned from work, he once again had purchased a lovely garment for his wife. (LIGHTS COME UP to reveal ZANUBA alone in the room.)

JABIR’S VOICE: (From OFF RIGHT.) Amina, my beautiful bride, I have just returned from the bazaar. Gaze upon this silken garment I bought for you today.

JABIR: (ENTERS RIGHT. Happy.) It is far more impressive than the brass vessels I purchased yester— (Pauses as he looks around the room. Very angry.) Where are the vessels?! (Runs to ZANUBA.) Oh, feathered fowl—what has passed here today?

ZANUBA: O, my Master, I could neither hear nor see, due to the rain and lightning and thunder which continued all day long!

JABIR: Rain?! Thunder?! Lightning?! You are a scoundrel and a liar! This is not the season for storms! One hundred pieces of gold for what turns out not be a parrot, but a coo-coo bird! Out of my house! Flee, you fowl!

ZANUBA: But, I love you with all my heart, great Master. Please! Let me remain! Otherwise, I shall die of a broken heart.

JABIR: Enough of your words, traitor! Fly!

ZANUBA: First, Master—have pity. Possibly a small pita cracker before I leave?

JABIR: (Extremely angry.) Away before I crack your neck and boil your carcass for my dinner! (ZANUBA runs for her life. EXITS RIGHT.)

TUFAIL: O, great Master—you do not know the truth!

JABIR: Do not think me as foolish as the three of you! Other than my beautiful wife, Amina, you servants are the only people in this house! Who do you expect me to believe is stealing my wife’s gifts? Amina, herself?! Why— (interrupted as AMINA ENTERS LEFT, dragging a large bag behind her. Seeing AMINA, he becomes suspicious. Walks silently behind AMINA, taps her on the shoulder, frightening her.)

AMINA: Oh, Jabir... it is you... home early, I see. Well...
JABIR: Dear wife. What do you conceal inside that cloth?

AMINA: (Extremely nervous.) What cloth? Oh—this one! Nothing, dear husband. Only odds and ends to be discarded.

JABIR: (Grabs the sack from AMINA, and the brass vessels tumble out from inside. He is in shock.) Odds and ends?! Then... it is all true! You have been the thief all along! All along!

AMINA: Please, let me explain—

JABIR: (Crosses away from AMINA and looks up to the skies, tears in his eyes. Calls out.) Zanuba! Come back to me! Lovely Zanuba. Forgive me. For, if you do not, I shall die of broken heart. Find it in your heart to return, prettiest of all the birds! (BLACKOUT.)

End of Scene Two

ACT ONE

Scene Three

LIGHTS UP: On KAMAL’S area at the bazaar.

KAMAL: But the parrot did not answer. Nor did she ever. And, for the rest of his life, Jabir grieved for what he had done.

PRINCESS: Very interesting, beggar. Aisha—a piece of gold for...

KAMAL: Kamal.

PRINCESS: (Remains cold and aloof to KAMAL. A brat.) For the blind beggar.

AISHA: (Hands KAMAL a coin.) Now, we must purchase the fruit for dessert. After coming such a great distance, the shah will be quite hungry.

PRINCESS: I suppose you are correct, Aisha. Now, take heed and listen to my words—we would not need to buy apples if the maid’s dirty little children did not gobble them all down as they did last week. Make certain she keeps them out of the palace!

AISHA: I have spoken to her about the apples, my Princess. She is very sorry and begs your forgiveness.

PRINCESS: As well she should!

AISHA: However, the thieves are mere children, and the youngest girl is so tiny and hungry.

PRINCESS: That is not my problem. She and her family have their food—

AISHA: What there is of it.

PRINCESS: (Not hearing a word, continues.) And we have ours. That is the way of this world. It is time her little ones learned that lesson! (She and AISHA begin to leave, but KAMAL speaks up.)

KAMAL: That is quite harsh, Princess. Very selfish.
PRINCESS: This is life, old man! For someone who has nothing to call his own, how can you understand when the hungry rob my pantry?!

KAMAL: You have lived in this village all your days and have never encountered Yasin—or his family?

PRINCESS: More beggars?

KAMAL: Yasin is known far and wide as "The Devoted Israelite." He was a pious and devout man who, each morning, would sell the cotton thread he and his family spun the night before for bread. One day he was on the point of purchasing food when he met a fellow who told him a long tale of poverty. He was so taken by this story, that Yasin gave away the only food he and his family had for that day so the other man would not starve. Now, Yasin had to tell his own family, who were hungry and eagerly awaiting his arrival, that they had nothing to eat. (BLACKOUT.)

End of Scene Three

ACT ONE
Scene Four
"The Devoted Israelite"

LIGHTS UP: On the meager home of YASIN (can be a bare stage). YASIN'S FAMILY—KHADIJA, his wife, and his two twin sons, SAYYID and SAAD, are waiting patiently and hungrily, for him to return home.

KHADIJA: Sit and rest, Sayyid and Saad. A watched camel never drinks, as they say. Your father will be home soon enough with our daily bread.

TWINS: (Speak simultaneously and move in complete synchronicity, as well.) We hope so. The work was so hard this day. We are very, very hungry, Mother!

KHADIJA: (Looks LEFT.) I see your father at the end of the road this very instant, my boys.

TWINS: And he carries our great dinner in his hands?

KHADIJA: Not so great, it seems. I can not see it this night. Perhaps it is a trick caused by the moon. Or, perhaps Father hides it behind his back.

TWINS: (Laugh.) So like Father. Always the merry prankster! (YASIN ENTERS. KHADIJA and the TWINS move to him in anticipation.) Enough of this foolishness, funny Father!

KHADIJA: Yes, give me the bread, Yasin, so I may warm it up.

TWINS: So we may eat it up! (YASIN looks to his family and holds his hands out. They are empty.)

KHADIJA: (Fears the worst.) Yasin? Where is our bread?
YASIN: There is no bread this night. But, there will be other nights, my family.

TWINS: (Horrified.) What?!

YASIN: There will be no feast this evening. Be content, dear family, to feel the warmth in your heart that one much more unfortunate than we has sustenance this night.

KHADIJA: (Furious.) The only warmth I wish to feel in my heart is the heartburn of poorly baked bread, you fool!

TWINS: (Throw a tantrum.) We want to eat! We want to eat! We want to eat!

KHADIJA: Quiet, Sayyid and Saad. Your father may have mistaken the village idiot for a wise man earlier this night, but he will still deliver the meal we, too, worked and toiled for this day! (Hands YASIN a jar.) Here. Take this old cracked jar to the bazaar, Yasin. It should bring a piece of silver, at the very least.

YASIN: (Looks at the jar skeptically.) This old piece? But—

KHADIJA: (Means business.) And, do not come back until you have food for our stomachs!

TWINS: And, that goes double for us, failed Father! (YASIN moves UPSTAGE as the LIGHTS FADE OUT on YASIN'S home and COME UP DIM on the bazaar. YASIN'S FAMILY FREEZES. EXTRAS ENTER and move about the bazaar area, as desired. Once YASIN is in the bazaar, he holds the jar out in front of him. EVERYONE passes by, ignoring him.)

KAMAL’S VOICE: It was just as he feared—none would buy the jar. However, there suddenly appeared a fishmonger. (FISHMONGER ENTERS LEFT with a large fish.) And, he was carrying a fish so swollen and painful in its stench that there was no way the fisherman could have ever found a buyer for it. (PEOPLE in the bazaar react in disgust upon smelling the fish.)

FISHMONGER: (Soon, he and YASIN find themselves face to face, looking at the worthless items each holds. After a pause.) Now, what could be fairer than I trade thee one worthless thing for another?

YASIN: (Smiles and nods. The FISHMONGER holds out the jar.) Yea, and willingly shall I trade. (Both he and the FISHMONGER feel they have gotten the better of the other, and leave the bazaar, satisfied. The FISHMONGER EXITS LEFT and LIGHTS FADE OUT on the bazaar. EXTRAS EXIT. YASIN moves DOWNSTAGE while the LIGHTS COME UP on his home, where KHADIJA and the TWINS eagerly await his return. KHADIJA stands at the door.)

KHADIJA: (Excited.) I see your father, my sons! And he carries our meal in his hands like a trophy!
TWINS: Oh, we can smell the sweetness of the bread from here!

KHADIJA: (Takes a deep breath and reacts in disgust, covering her nose.) That is not exactly how I would describe its aroma.

TWINS: (Breathe deep and they, too, are stunned by the stench.) That is no trophy for valor! (YASIN ENTERS with the fish. The TWINS recoil from the odor.) We possess a fool for a father!

KHADIJA: What can be done with such a bloated, rotten fish, which will surely drive us out of the house?

TWINS: (Scramble to exit, pulling one another out of the way.) Let me out! No, let me out! No, let me out!

YASIN: (Speaks with wise thought.) We will boil it and eat thereof. (The FAMILY becomes silent. As YASIN holds the fish, a pearl suddenly drops from its mouth.

KHADIJA: (Picks it up and is immediately flanked by the TWINS. Mouth agape.) It is a perfect pearl! Look, Yasin—a perfect pearl!

TWINS: Round and shiny like the moon.

YASIN: Be certain it belongs to no other. Check the pearl for a hole. If not, then it is a gift from Allah Almighty, for each of us.

KHADIJA: (She and the TWINS stare at the bauble intensely. Joyous.) It is not pierced!

TWINS: (Cheer.) Smooth as an onion! (The FAMILY rejoices at this good fortune and hugs one other in celebration. The LIGHTS FADE, and YASIN moves UPSTAGE, taking the pearl to the bazaar. HASSAN ENTERS LEFT. LIGHTS COME UP on the bazaar.)

HASSAN: (Examines the pearl.) Very nice. Very nice. A perfect pearl. Of excellent quality. And, just where did you discover this jewel, Yasin?

YASIN: Here at the bazaar, from a stinking, bloated old fish.

HASSAN: (Shocked.) What did you say?! I never dreamed that I would ever hear a man as devoted to others as you, Yasin, describe one of the merchants in that fashion. However… I do believe I know of whom you speak. Is he the fat slave trader in the third tent from left of the—

YASIN: (Realizes the mistake HASSAN has made.) No. A fish. An actual fish. It must have swallowed the pearl while swimming in the great ocean. Please, good Hassan, tell me its worth.

HASSAN: I will give thee 80,000 dirhams.

YASIN: (Astounded.) Eighty thousand dirhams?!

HASSAN: (Quickly gives YASIN a sack of coins.) And not a jot more! Agreed? (He and YASIN shake hands on the matter.) Good. Now,
Yasin, 80,000 dirhams is quite a sum. You will need an escort home. I will instruct my slave, Mahmud, to take you there and make certain you are unharmed.

YASIN: Thank you, Hassan. You are an honest jeweler.

HASSAN: And a fine day to you, Yasin. (Claps his hands loudly and commands with a bellow.) Mahmud!

MAHMUD: (Enters left as Hassan exits left, looking over his new prized pearl.) I am Mahmud, slave of Hassan. I am to carry the fortune and protect you on the journey home.

YASIN: (Eagerly shakes Mahmud's hand.) I am Yasin, maker of cotton thread. I am as fine as I am. I have no enemies. Remain here with Hassan and rest. You need not see me to my door.

MAHMUD: (Insistent.) But I have been ordered to do so. I will be beaten if I do not accompany you, sir.

YASIN: (Pause.) Very well, Mahmud. Very well, then. (Hands Mahmud the sack of riches.)

MAHMUD: (Astonished.) The sack is very heavy, good Yasin. There must be 50,000 dirhams in here, at the very least.

YASIN: Eighty thousand.

MAHMUD: (Even more impressed.) Eighty?! (He and Yasin begin walking. However, Mahmud suddenly stops and turns to Yasin. Yasin is taken aback, and a bit worried… he suspects a possible robbery.)

YASIN: What is the meaning of this?

MAHMUD: (However, he is not threatening, but sincere.) Please, good Yasin, please hear me. You are a great and rich man. My family and I have no clothes, no blankets, no food, no shelter… give me part of thy gift from Allah.

YASIN: (Looks at Mahmud and nods with understanding.) Only this morning my family and I were as poor as you. Here, my brother… (Opens the sack, pours many coins into his hands and happily places those coins into Mahmud's open palm.) Take half of what is mine for you and your loved ones.

MAHMUD: (As the coins touch Mahmud's palm, the stage lights change into a glorious hue. Mahmud suddenly stands erect, and speaks with great love in his heart.) No, Yasin. Take your money home to your family.

YASIN: (Confused and taken aback.) You… you are not a slave. Just who are you and what do you want of me?

MAHMUD: I am a messenger of the Lord.

YASIN: The Lord?
MAHMUD: Yes, kind Yasin. He sent me here to test your faith. You are a special man, A devoted Israelite. (YASIN kneels before him.) You, your wife and your twin sons will never want again. Great riches, food and drink will be yours from this day forward... and to share with any you feel are in need or deserving. Yasin, for the rest of your life, this shall be your destiny.

YASIN: All praise to Almighty Allah! (BLACKOUT.)

End of Scene Four

ACT ONE

Scene Five

LIGHTS UP: On KAMAL’S area at the bazaar. PRINCESS is glued to KAMAL’S words.

PRINCESS: And then what?

KAMAL: What “what”?

PRINCESS: What became of Yasin, his wife and those twin boys?

KAMAL: (Begins laughing gently to himself.) It was just as the messenger from the Lord had prophesied. He and his family lived in peace the rest of their lives and never wanted for anything... and always had enough to give to those who truly needed.

PRINCESS: (Thinks about this for a moment, then feels guilty.) That is an interesting tale, ah...

KAMAL: Kamal. My name is Kamal.

PRINCESS: And I am Princess—

KAMAL: (Finishes her words.) Maryam.

PRINCESS: (Stunned.) How did you know that?

KAMAL: As I told you, I see with my heart. With my soul.

AISHA: (Quickly ENTERS LEFT with a basket of apples.) I purchased the fruit, dear Princess. We must make haste. We dare no longer wait.

PRINCESS: (Takes an apple from the basket and studies it. With disgust.) Aisha! These are not the apples we serve! They are of poor quality!

AISHA: You squandered the time, Princess. The apples we usually purchase are on the other side of the bazaar, and we do not have time to travel there. These will have to do.

PRINCESS: But, Mother will be angry.

AISHA: Just this once we will tell her the other apples were sold. Come along now, child.

KAMAL: Ah... but, that is a lie.

AISHA: Not in front of the princess!
PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES

ONSTAGE, ACT ONE, Scene One: Large rug, tray for donations, rug stand and other optional booths and items for sale in the marketplace.

BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE, Scene One:
- Gold coin (AISHA)
- Sack of gold coins (PRINCESS)

ONSTAGE, ACT ONE, Scene Two: Same as ACT ONE, Scene One, with optional items and treasures to indicate a rich home.

BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE, Scene Two:
- Two large brass vessels, silken garment (JABIR)
- Jewel on a necklace, large bag containing brass vessels (AMINA)
- Coffee grinder (TUFAIL)
- Bowl of water (AKBAR)
- Mirror (Ali)

ONSTAGE, ACT ONE, Scene Three: Same as ACT ONE, Scene One.

ONSTAGE, ACT ONE, Scene Four: Same as ACT ONE, Scene One, with optional items to indicate a poor home, including a cracked jar.

BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE, Scene Four:
- Fish with a pearl in its mouth (FISHMONGER)
- Sack of coins (HASSAN)

ONSTAGE, ACT ONE, Scene Five: Same as ACT ONE, Scene One.

BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE, Scene Five:
- Basket of poor quality apples (AISHA)

ONSTAGE, ACT ONE, Scene Six: Same as ACT ONE, Scene One, with a large rock (cardboard cutout).

BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE, Scene Six:
- Harness (IBRAHIM and DONKEY)
- Five gold pieces (IBRAHIM)

ONSTAGE, ACT TWO, Scene One: Same as ACT ONE, Scene One.

BROUGHT ON, ACT TWO, Scene One:
- New bundle of apples (AISHA)

ONSTAGE, ACT TWO, Scene Two: Same as ACT ONE, Scene One.

BROUGHT ON, ACT TWO, Scene Two:
- Large net containing a muddy bottle stopped with a cork (BHARAT)

ONSTAGE, ACT TWO, Scene Three: Same as ACT ONE, Scene One.

ONSTAGE, ACT TWO, Scene Four: Same as ACT ONE, Scene One.

For preview only
BROUGHT ON, ACT TWO, Scene Four:
Gold coins, large knives (HAROUN, GHASSAN)
ONSTAGE, ACT TWO, Scene Five: Same as ACT ONE, Scene One.

SOUND EFFECTS AND MUSIC
Arabian music for the opening scene, magical sounds for GENIE’S appearance, sounds of strong winds.

LIGHTING EFFECTS
Spotlight, changing hues, swirling lights.

FLEXIBLE CASTING
The show can be performed with a cast as large as 34 or as small as 12. There are many ways to double and triple parts, and several characters are flexible in gender. Below is just one suggestion for a smaller cast.

ACTOR 1: KAMAL
ACTOR 2: YASIN, BHARAT, HAROUN
ACTOR 3: TURNIL, FISHMONGER, SHAWKAT, CASSIM
ACTOR 4: AKBAR, HASSAN, IBRAHIM, GHASSAN
ACTOR 5: ALL MAHMUD, KHALIL, GENIE
ACTOR 6: JABIR, DONKEY
ACTRESS 1: MARYAM
ACTRESS 2: AISHA
ACTRESS 3: MINAXI, AMINA, KHADJA, SHAHIDA
ACTRESS 4: NECVA, SAYYID (played female), ANJUM
ACTRESS 5: SHIVANI, SAAD (played female), EMINA, MORIGANA
ACTRESS 6: ZANUBA, LELIA, SEEMA

COSTUMING
Costuming can be as simple or elaborate as your budget allows. ZANUBA can wear a colorful leotard and a feathered mask along with a feathered tail and wings attached. You could also construct a head made of paper and feathers or sew colorful cutouts onto a cape or poncho. Let your imagination soar!
The DONKEY can simply wear a gray or brown costume with ears and a tail attached.

For preview only
THE GENIE

The easiest way to pull off the magical appearance of the GENIE is to have a blackout accompanied by pre-recorded sound effects. If possible, a smoke machine can be used along with the actor popping up out of a trap door. Whichever way you choose, the same effect should be repeated for his exit.

THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Keeper of the Tales had its premiere production in Braun Center for the Performing Arts, Pasadena, California, by the Westridge School for Girls Summer Theatre on July 15, 1999, directed by author Tim Wright, with assistant direction by Sian Leong, Shelly Lewis, costume design by Alexandra Cacciarelli, Julia Long, technical direction by Lexie Kovach and stage management by Megan LaCasse, Betsy Roth, summer school head Paul Stephenson, performing arts coordinator Paul Tzanetopoulos, head of school Fran Norris Scolbe.

CAST

KAMAL .......................................INDIA WALLACE
PRINCESS MARYAM ...................OLIVIA HASSAN
AISHA .......................................DEVIA BHATIA
MINAX ........................................ADRIENNE CARASCO
NECVA .......................................ALEXANDRA SCOTT
SHIVANI ......................................HEATHER HEALY
JABIR .........................................ALEXANDRA BARNARDO
AMINA .......................................SARAH WILSON
ZANUBA ......................................KATIE MITCHELL
TUFAIL .......................................ADRIENNE CARASCO
AKBAR ........................................ALEXANDRA SCOTT
ALI ............................................SABRINA ELFARRA
YASIN .......................................INDIA BRADLEY
KHADIJA ......................................SAROYA WATLEY
SAYYID .......................................MAUDIE BANTA
SAAD ............................................CHRISTIE KIM
FISHMONGER ................................BRIDGET HOLMES
HASSAN ......................................ANDREA ABRAMS
MAHMUD .....................................MORGAN STEVENSON
SHAWKAT ....................................MARA LEONG
KHALIL .......................................STEPHANIE ALEJANDRO

For preview only
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A member of the Dramatists Guild of America, Inc. and Author’s League of America, Tim received his B.A., with honors, in Theatre Arts from California State University, Sacramento and his M.F.A., with honors, in Dramatic Art from University of California, Davis. Having directed over 200 plays in his career, Mr. Wright has also written for ABC-TV, NBC-TV, Ron Howard Productions, and Osmond Television Entertainment. A filmmaker, his short films have won awards at film festivals in New York, Michigan and California, and have been featured on several television programs. Author of numerous stage plays, with three of them national playwriting award winners, Tim has been named an Outstanding Teacher in America by the University of Chicago in 2002, nominated to Who’s Who Among America’s Teachers in 2002, 2005, and 2006 and was honored as a “Teacher Making a Difference” by the California State Senate, California State Legislature, California Board of Equalization and the Cherry Blossom Festival at the Rose Bowl in 2006. Tim also heads the drama program at Westridge School for Girls in Pasadena, California, where he teaches Acting and Directing and directs four main-stage plays a year as well as their highly successful Summer Theatre company. Tim Wright lives in Burbank, California.
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