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**ALI BABA AND THE ARABIAN NIGHTS**

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# Ali Baba and the Arabian Nights

A two-act comedy adaptation

by Craig Sodaro



Meriwether Publishing Ltd.

**Contemporary Drama Service**

PO Box 7710 • Colorado Springs, CO 80933-7710

# Ali Baba and the Arabian Nights

A two-act play

by Craig Sodaro

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*5 male, 8 female, 7 male or female*

- Sesame Scheherezade** — the storyteller  
**Sitt Al Husn** — an old woman, a soothsayer  
**Abdullah** — a middle-aged tailor and undertaker  
**Kasim** — a middle-aged merchant, Ali's brother  
**Fatimah** — Kasim's domineering wife  
**Ali Baba** — a young man in search of himself  
**Jasmine** — a young woman in search of herself  
**Mirna** — Jasmine's doting mother  
**Ribya** — Jasmine's doting aunt  
**Hasan** — a vicious master thief  
**Duban** — one of the thieves  
**Yuban** — one of the thieves  
**Bismillah** — one of the thieves  
**Jafar** — one of the thieves  
**Harun** — one of the thieves  
**Mukbil** — one of the thieves  
**Sesame** — guard at The Cave of Death  
**Ifrit** — another merchant  
**Morgania** — a servant in Kasim's house  
**Dunyazade** — a servant in Mirna's house

## *PRODUCTION NOTES*

### **Synopsis**

Ali Baba can't do anything right, and everybody but the old soothsayer knows it. He's the brunt of every joke and the thorn in the side of Kasim, his brother, and Fatimah, his brother's grasping wife. Though Ali loves Jasmine and she him, her mother and aunt want a match not made in the gutter and will do anything to keep the two apart, including marrying Jasmine off to the older, coldhearted Abdullah, the local undertaker.

But fate intervenes for Ali. While picking up firewood near the foreboding Cave of Death outside of the village, Ali hears someone coming. He hides just as the master thief Hasan and his band arrive at The Cave. Using the magic words, "Open, Sesame," Hasan and his men are able to enter The Cave of Death where they have been storing a vast fortune. When the thieves leave — confident their secret is safe — Ali opens The Cave and takes three bags of gold coins.

Ali makes the mistake of borrowing a scale from Fatimah so he can weigh the gold he's acquired. She places wax at the bottom of the scale so that she can find out what he's weighing. When a gold coin stuck to the wax tells the tale, Kasim demands to know where the money is. Ali tells his forgetful brother the magic words needed to get into The Cave. Kasim is able to enter The Cave, but gets trapped.

Hasan and his men find Kasim inside their treasure trove and find that three bags of gold are missing. Hasan puts a spell on Kasim, forcing him to join the band of thieves. Hasan then sends one of his men to town to find out who stole the three bags of gold. Once Hasan knows, he devises a plan to steal back his gold: His men will hide in oil jars and, once the Kasim's household is asleep, the thieves will jump out of the jars and rob and pillage the village.

However, Ali and Jasmine, who has briefly escaped from the annoying suitor Abdullah, foil Hasan's plan with handfuls of ants. The thieves jump out of the jars in front of the entire village and race off. Unfortunately, Ali is not hailed as a hero, but is instead accused of the murder of Jasmine's mother and aunt. Indeed, the two kidnapped Ali, but he had managed a clever escape and left them trapped in The Cave of Death for safekeeping. The townspeople, unaware of this, chase Ali and Jasmine to The Cave where Ali opens Sesame and reveals the missing women arrayed in gold and jewels and more than happy to call Ali a son-in-law.

NOTE: Since Scheherezade introduces each scene, if desired, she can present her lines in front of the closed curtain to allow a bit more time for a scene change. She can then exit into the scene as one of the villagers. If no curtain is used, she can present her lines Downstage as a change is completed Upstage.

## **Set**

There are two sets for the play. The first is an Arabian village. At the center of the village is the exterior of Kasim's shop. There is an entrance at the center of the house. If desired, this can be covered with fabric or beads. Two other houses, or suggestions of houses, stand on the left and right of Kasim's. No doors or entrances are necessary. If desired, a bush or palm tree may decorate the Upstage area. If only a suggestion of houses is used, the doors in Act I, Scene Five can be brought on and held by actors not required in the scene, as indicated in the script.

The second set is The Cave of Death. This can be elaborate or very simple. Only the suggestion of the exterior needs to be seen. Sesame stands as the entrance of The Cave. This actor opens and closes the entrance and can do so by body movements suggesting that he or she is the door with fabric attached to his or her arm(s). At least one bush needs to be On-stage with The Cave so that an actor can hide behind it. A few sticks should be preset on the stage floor for Act I, Scene Two.

**Suggestion:** The Cave can be painted on the other side of Kasim's house so that it only need be turned around for a scene change.

## **Synopsis of Scenes**

### Act I

Scene One — An Arabian village, early afternoon in spring

Scene Two — The Cave of Death, a short time later

Scene Three — The village, an hour later

Scene Four — The Cave, an hour later

Scene Five — The village, that evening

Scene Six — The village, the following morning

### Act II

Scene One — The Cave, later that day

Scene Two — The village, that evening

Scene Three — The Cave, a short time later

## **Costumes**

A little research and imagination can help create cheap, but colorful costumes for any production. For starters, buy fabrics that are a solid color, generally in the brightest possible colors. Broadcloth works very well for theatrical productions and is usually the most reasonable fabric.

All male characters should wear a basic robe or tunic belted at the waist. The wealthier characters — Abdullah, Kasim, Ifrit, Hasan — should also wear another robe, like a long, unbuttoned vest. This should be colorful and can have an embroidered edge. This is not belted. Other male characters wear shorter robes or tunics, belted at the waist. All wear the traditional Arabian headdress, the shemagh, also called a keffiyad, of varying colors.

All female characters should wear a long robe or tunic belted at the waist. As with the male characters, the wealthier characters — Mirna, Ribya, Fatimah, Jasmine — wear additional fabric of bright colors worn in a

toga-like fashion, covering the head as well as the upper body. Jewelry is a necessary part of the wealthier costumes. The poorer female characters can wear a scarf on their heads.

Sitt should wear very ragged clothing of dull colors.

All characters, male and female, wear sandals.

Two characters need additional costume pieces. Duban needs a robe to add to his basic tunic/robe for his clandestine visit to the village in Act I, Scene Five. This robe should be rich in appearance and of a bright color. Hasan needs a poor, ragged robe, shemagh, and eye patch when he portrays the beggar in Act I, Scene Six.

### Props

Sticks preset around cave, Act I, Scene 2

Fatimah — Spoon, dusty rug, rug beater, scale, tray

Kasim — Jug, burlap bag containing blue fabric

Abdullah — Measuring tape, jewelry and “silk” fabric

Ali — Rope, bag of sticks, gold coins, jewelry, small sack

Sitt — Tarot or other fortune-telling cards, coin, eye patch

Stuffed bags (Hasan, Duban, Yuban, Bismillah, Jafar, Harun, Mukbil)

Hasan — Gold coins, gold pendant, sword, tin cup, eye patch, knife

Jasmine — Bracelet, coin

Duban, Yuban, Bismillah, Jafar, Harun, Mukbil — Larger stuffed bags, jars\*

Yuban, Bismillah, Jafar, Harun, Mukbil — Cardboard doors

Duban — Chalk

Morgania — Cloth, rug

Morgania, Dunyazade — Pots and paint brushes

Dunyazade — Pitcher

Mirna, Ribya — Large burlap sack, silks, jewelry

\*The jars can be cut out of cardboard and attached to a light wooden frame with a hinged board that, when opened, will enable the jar to stand by itself. Paint the jars a sandy color and shade them so they look like they're round.



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Act I  
Scene One

*(Played before the curtain. SCHEHEREZADE enters left.)*

**SCHEHEREZADE:** And now for your pleasure, a tale of treachery, of love, of foolishness and wisdom, of youth and age, of the everyday and of the wonderful. I take you to a village, a bustling oasis in the desert ... *(The curtain opens to reveal the village. On-stage, the various characters stand frozen in an activity that suits them. ALI cowers Downstage left under the vengeful hand of FATIMAH who is about to hit him with a spoon. KASIM stands nearby trying to sell a jug to MIRNA, who is shielding JASMINE with one arm from looking at ALLI. ABDULLAH is measuring IFRIT for a cloak, while DUBAN, YUBAN, BISMILLAH, JAFAR, HARUN, and MUKBIL huddle together. SITT AL HUSN stands Downstage left holding the hand of HASAN, a shocked expression on SITT's face. MORGANIA polishes a silver plate while RIBYA gives orders to DUNYAZADE. As she speaks, SHEHERAZADE weaves through the crowd of players, making it clear who she is pointing out.)* **What is a village without a merchant, such as Kasim — a successful salesman who lives in the large house here. But behind every successful man there is a good woman, and Fatimah, Kasim's wife, keeps him on the straight and narrow. I can't say as much for Kasim's brother. What is a village without a lazy freeloader? Young Ali Baba appears to go blissfully through life without raising a finger. And what would a village be without romance? Ali Baba has eyes only for Jasmine, but Jasmine's mother, Mirna, wants Jasmine to set her sights a bit higher than the gutter. What is a village without a tailor who is also an undertaker? Abdullah can measure you for your suit or your coffin, as you wish. And what village never faces a wolf in sheep's clothing, lurking in the shadows, waiting for a chance to strike? Hasan and his assistants can rob you blind without your ever**

1           **knowing it. And what is a village without one who can see**  
2           **into the future. Sitt Al Husn, the soothsayer, sees all, hears**  
3           **all, and knows all.**

4       **SITT: For two pieces of silver I will tell you how this all turns**  
5           **out!**

6       **SCHEHEREZADE: Never! Our friends have come to see the**  
7           **whole story, not just the end. Thus, we start at the**  
8           **beginning!** *(SCHEHEREZADE claps her hands. ALL actors*  
9           *come to life, and quickly go about their business. HASAN, DUBAN,*  
10           *YUBAN, BISMILLAH, JAFAR, HARUN, and MUKBIL exit*  
11           *Downstage left. ALI scoots off right. FATIMAH herds MORGANIA*  
12           *into the center house. MIRNA pulls JASMINE Off-stage right.*  
13           *RIBYA and DUNYAZADE exit left after them. ABDULLAH moves*  
14           *to KASIM.)* **A day full of sun, but in early spring the heat**  
15           **does not stir up the desert winds until long after dawn. A**  
16           **typical day of work, of play, of pleasures, of sorrows.**  
17           *(SCHEHEREZADE exits left. ABDULLAH and KASIM break into*  
18           *laughter.)*

19       **ABDULLAH: Kasim, your brother is undoubtedly the biggest**  
20           **coward I have ever seen!**

21       **KASIM: It was the evil eye cast on him at birth by Sitt Al Husn!**

22       **ABDULLAH: But still! Hunting with us this morning he**  
23           **displayed not a shred of courage.**

24       **KASIM: I know! I know! He is less than worthless!** *(ALI enters*  
25           *right with a rope that is taut. He drops the rope. He is tired and out*  
26           *of breath.)*

27       **ABDULLAH: And here's the lazy good-for-nothing now!**

28       **KASIM: (Looking right) So! What are you dragging behind you?**

29       **ALI: A bear.**

30       **ABDULLAH: A bear?!**

31       **KASIM: How did you ever bag a bear?**

32       **ABDULLAH: I know! It died of laughter when it saw you run**  
33           **from the lion.**

34       **KASIM: And hide from the tiger.**

35       **ABDULLAH: And you brought shame on your family when you**

1           climbed the rocks to avoid the rhino.  
2   **ALI:** I am sorry, my brother.  
3   **KASIM:** We take you out hunting so you can learn to find food.  
4   **ABDULLAH:** But you're hopeless, Ali Baba. The soothsayer was  
5           right. You'll never amount to anything.  
6   **ALI:** But ... but I will! You'll see! I'll be the strongest, most  
7           famous man in all the desert! (*KASIM and ABDULLAH laugh*  
8           *loudly.*)  
9   **KASIM:** Oh, and I suppose we will all be in your debt!  
10   **ABDULLAH:** Ali Baba! Our leader! (*KASIM and ABDULLAH*  
11           *laugh again.*)  
12   **ALI:** Laugh all you like, but my family will live in the grandest  
13           house and eat only partridge tongues and quail eggs.  
14   **KASIM:** Family?  
15   **ABDULLAH:** Who would marry you?  
16   **ALI:** I won't tell you!  
17   **KASIM:** That's because no one would wed such a lazy fool.  
18   **ALI:** Jasmine will!  
19   **ABDULLAH:** The widow Mirna's daughter?  
20   **KASIM:** Oh, Ali Baba, you are an even bigger fool than I  
21           thought!  
22   **ABDULLAH:** Jasmine is beautiful, yes, but she brings nothing  
23           to a marriage.  
24   **KASIM:** Even in that they're not equal! Ali brings less than  
25           nothing! (*KASIM and ABDULLAH laugh heartily.*)  
26   **ALI:** I love Jasmine and that's all that matters.  
27   **ABDULLAH:** You've got to get yourself a wife who brings a  
28           dowry. (*FATIMAH enters from house holding a dirty rug in one*  
29           *hand and a rug beater in the other.*)  
30   **KASIM:** And speaking of wonderful wives, how goes it, my little  
31           sugar plum?  
32   **FATIMAH:** What's with the sweet talk? What have you done  
33           now?  
34   **KASIM:** We have a surprise for you.  
35   **FATIMAH:** What? You won the lottery?

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