

Characters

Aladdin (M/F)	Son of Widow Twankey. Dreamy and romantic. Helps mother in laundry. *Needs to be comfortable singing or miming, and dancing.
Widow Twankey (M)	Pantomime dame type character. Aladdin's widowed mother and laundress.
Aba Knees-Up (M)	Wicked uncle and magician.
Krithi (M/F)	Avaricious cousin of Aba Knees-Up.
Spirit of the Christmas Cracker Ring (M/F)	Bright and bubbly character bewitched into Christmas cracker ring by Aba Knees-Up. Needs to hop and skip.
Genius of the lamp (M/F)	Clever-clogs and a bit of a pedant; tricked by Genie to replace him in lamp. A bit of attitude. Maybe a bit like Ann Robinson of 'The Weakest Link'.
Fatima of the Lots of Veils (F)	A belly dancer past her prime. *Needs to be comfortable belly dancing.
Salmal (M/F)	The storyteller. At side of stage throughout. Reads from big book. (Does not need to learn the lines, but does need to read well, act them out, and be very familiar with them.) *Not a suspect!
Princess Rhododendron (F)	Sultan's independently minded daughter. *Needs to be comfortable singing or miming, and dancing.
Omar the Opulent (M)	The patriarchal and riches loving Sultan.
Farviz the Oracle (M/F)	An eastern seer.
Detective (M/F)	Inspector Maigret/Clouseau/Morse/Endeavour? Miss Marbles/Vera? Or director's choice. Needs to audition, come to a number of rehearsals, and be well prepared for role, e.g. Know the script, characters, their motivations, the red herrings, the clues, who dun-it, how and why, and explain cohesively and interestingly to audience. Read out winning answer or nearest correct answer afterwards, plus a couple of honourable mentions, plus a couple of funniest answers.
Gardener (M/F)	(Not counted in cast list, as easily doubled by detective in disguise, or played by director.) No lines. Walk on part, each entrance lasting a very short time.
Voices of Palace Guards (M/F)	(Not counted in cast list as the male characters can shout out the three short phrases offstage.)

Act 1

Scene 1 - Widow Twankey's laundry

(The scene is set with an old rope washing line, strung up in front of palace. A few amusing items of washing are suspended from wooden dolly pegs. Other laundry accoutrements are in place. SFX. Theme music. Play 'Arabian Nights' by Alan Menken (instrumental version if no singer available for accompanying song. If there is a good singer in cast, sing accompanying song to 'Arabian Nights'. Can be sung onstage or offstage. If the singer also happens to be the storyteller, he/she, takes seat after the song.)

Storyteller: **(Enters carrying a very large story book. Puts book on stand at side of stage. Bows exotically and mystically to audience)** Greetings oh beloved ones. I am Salmal the storyteller. Tonight, I will read you the story of 'Aladdin', in my book of one hundred and one nights. One thousand and one nights is the usual number, but my memory isn't that good. **(Indicate Widow Twankey entering.)** Once upon a time, there lived a poor washerwoman named Widow Twankey.

(Widow Twankey enters with wash basket full of amusing items of laundry and begins holding them up to inspect. Do this whilst storyteller is speaking.)

Storyteller: Although she was poor, she had aspirations for herself and her son Aladdin. One aspiration was to lift themselves out of poverty, and for her son to marry well, but her heart held a terrible secret. Aladdin **(indicates Aladdin entering, but Aladdin does not enter. He again indicates and speaks louder.)** Aladdin -

(Aladdin enters looking dreamy.)

Storyteller: Aladdin was an idle youth; dreamer of dreams, and as honest as the day was long; possibly a little dim.

(Aladdin turns to storyteller with displeasure and folds his arms in a frown.)

Storyteller: **(Shrugs)** Most likely his age. **(Sits in oriental style chair (or covered with oriental cloth) at side of stage by bookstand.)**

Widow Twankey: **(Turns to Aladdin)** There you are! You've been gone for hours – you have delivered all the clean washing, haven't you?

(Aladdin looks vague)

Widow Twankey: Haven't you?

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Aladdin: Oh, mother I'm sorry! It totally went out of my head. I've been in a lovely dream all day. I'll deliver them now though, right away, pronto.

Widow Twankey: **(Reprimanding)** Oh Aladdin, you are a trial to me. Here am I working my poor fingers to the bone, and there's you – dreaming again! What would your poor father have said!

Aladdin: Father would have understood. He remembered what it was to be young – and in love.

Widow Twankey: Yes, he did have rather a roving eye.

Aladdin: **(Dreamily)** My eyes are for one only.

Widow Twankey: Again!

Aladdin: This time it's for real mother, and for ever!

Widow Twankey: **(Unconsciously sighs)** That's what I once thought!

Aladdin: **(Puzzled)** But you and father were happy weren't you; despite his roving eye?

Widow Twankey: **(Quickly)** Oh yes, yes, of course we were. I'll never forget his chat up line when we first met.

Aladdin: What was it?

Widow Twankey: **(Holds up a few socks)** 'If we were socks, we'd make a great pair!'

Aladdin: How romantic, mother.

Widow Twankey: **(Sighs)** Yes, wasn't it. **(Changing subject)** - So, who's the lucky girl this time?

Aladdin: Princess Rhododendron.

Widow Twankey: **(Disbelieving)** Princess Rhododendron!

Aladdin: Yes, Princess Rhododendron!

Widow Twankey: Princess Rhododendron!

Aladdin: Yes, Princess Rhododendron!

Widow Twankey: Alright – you don't have to spell it out!

Aladdin: I couldn't if I tried!

Storyteller: **(Stands)** He couldn't if he tried.

Aladdin: **(Crossly to storyteller)** Do you mind!
(Storyteller shrugs and sits)

Aladdin: **(Continuing to mother)** All I know is, that I truly love her.

Widow Twankey: **(Rubbing at a mark on a laundry item.)** Never mind dear, I'm sure it will all come out in the wash.

Aladdin: **(Romantically)** It will never come out in the wash.

Widow Twankey: Ah but you haven't tried **(Suddenly brings out a packet of wash powder, holds it up, smiles and faces audience. Speaks as if on shopping channel.)** Magiwash soapy wash, guaranteed to remove everyday stains like camel dung, and **(interrupted by Aladdin)**

Aladdin: **(Interrupts mother)** Mother what are you doing?

Widow Twankey: I get a little bit of commission from the manufacturers for every packet I sell. **(Looks shocked at picture of black skull on back of packet. Make sure audience sees picture. To Aladdin)** Oh dear – be careful not to swallow it.

Aladdin: Well, put it away, the audience isn't interested in washing powder. And I want to tell you about Princess Rhododendron; she is so very, very beautiful.

Widow Twankey: **(Alarmed)** You, you haven't looked upon her face, have you? You know that Omar the Opulent chops off the heads of anyone who gazes upon her beauty.

Aladdin: **(Determined)** I have, and I mean to win her!

Widow Twankey: **(Despairing)** Oh Aladdin! What's to become of us! You a poor youth, without a father, and a scrubber for a mother. How will you ever win a princess? It's only a dream.

Aladdin: Leave it to me mother. I know it will come true; all I have to do is dream.

(Aladdin sings or mimes extract from 'All I Have To Do Is Dream' by Everly Brothers. Grabs a pair of pantaloons from laundry basket, and dances with them. SFX. Tinkling sound of ring falling from pocket of pantaloons.)

Aladdin: **(Stares at ring on floor. Picks it up. Holds it up.)** Look mother, a golden ring.

Widow Twankey: It must have fallen from the pocket of the pantaloons. Is anything else in the pocket?

Aladdin: **(Feels inside pocket and pulls out a large handkerchief. Sneezes, uses handkerchief, and absently places in own pocket.)** Who do they belong to?

Widow Twankey: Give them to me, I'll look at the label.

(Aladdin hands pantaloons to mother.)

Widow Twankey: **(Looks at label. Reads)** St Michael. **(Holds up pantaloons and inspects them)** Ah – they're here for repair.

Aladdin: Why's that?

Widow Twankey: **(Pokes a finger through a hole in a seam. Shows audience)** Because they're holey!!

Storyteller: **(Stands)** The old ones are the best. **(Sits)**

Widow Twankey: **(Looks at storyteller)** That's my line!

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Storyteller: **(Smiles annoyingly, then suddenly remembers that he has a character to introduce. Checks storybook. Stands)** Soon, we will come to the villain of our pantomime, and you will learn why it is, that within Widow Twankey's poor old heart, lies a terrible secret.

Widow Twankey: **(Looks at storyteller indignantly)** Less of the poor old heart; I'm a woman in her prime of life I'll have you know.

Storyteller: **(Shrugs. Points to book)** I'm only reading what it says here. **(Sits)**

(Widow Twankey looks vexed)

Aladdin: **(Inspecting ring)** It's a lovely ring.

(Flash and SFX. bang as Aba Knees-Up, enters. Widow Twankey stares at Aba Knees-Up in recognition and alarm.)

Aba Knees-Up: **(Entrance timed with SFX. To Aladdin.)** It is indeed a lovely ring and it belongs to me, but if you have the special qualities I'm seeking, you may keep it in payment for a small job I need doing.

Aladdin: Who are you?

Aba Knees-Up: I'm your, uncle, Aba Knees-Up.

Aladdin: What, now?

(SFX. Play brief excerpt from 'Knees Up Mother Brown'. Cockney Classic. Aladdin dances an enthusiastic 'knees up' to the music)

Aba Knees-Up: **(Nods)** Yes, you have the qualities.

Aladdin: **(Pleased with self)** Speed, skill, good looks?

Aba Knees-Up: Gullibility.

Aladdin: **(Puzzled)** What does that mean?

Aba Knees-Up: **(To audience)** Don't give him a dictionary anybody.
(Awaits audience reaction)

Aladdin: Are you Mother's brother?

Widow Twankey: **(Awkwardly)** No, he's your father, I mean, God rest his soul's, brother.

Aladdin: God's brother?

Widow Twankey: No, your father's brother, silly.

Aladdin: **(Puzzled)** My father's brother's silly?

Storyteller: **(Stands. Rebukes)** Don't be silly.

Aladdin: **(Crosses arms crossly. To storyteller.)** Do you mind!
(Storyteller Sits)

Aba Knees-Up: Returned from far off lands.

Aladdin: **(Looks at ring. Dreamily)** I could give this to Princess Rhododendron as an engagement ring.

Aba Knees-Up: **(Intrigued)** The princess is betrothed?

Widow Twankey: **(Thinks quickly. Takes ring from Aladdin and slides it onto her finger)** No, no – it's just that Aladdin is a kind boy, and if the Princess should become betrothed, he could give it to her, as a gift. **(Gives Aladdin a warning look, and makes noticeable zipping motion with her hand across her mouth.)**
(Aladdin misunderstands and gets the hankie out and wipes his mouth. Returns hankie to his pocket.)

Aba Knees-Up: **(Notices Widow's zipping action but says nothing)** If you want to keep the ring, come with me now, to carry out this small job.

Aladdin: What sort of job?

Aba Knees-Up: You will collect an oil lamp for me. I can't fit through the entrance into the place where my ancestor deposited it, but you are the copy of his size as a youth; as indeed was I. **(Looks at Widow Twankey meaningfully.)**

Widow Twankey: **(Puts hand to chest in a frightened way.)** Just like his dear father, God rest his soul.

Aba Knees-Up: **(Meaningfully)** Exactly. I can use the oil, to light my prayer lamp. **(Places hands together in religious manner.)**

Aladdin: **(With sudden inspiration takes pantaloons from Widow Twankey. Points to label)** Ah, you pray to St Michael.

Aba Knees-Up: **(Puzzled, looks at label. Flatters)** What an observant youth! Indeed, I do. **(Declares)** St Michael, patron saint of – of lamps! Now come along; my time is money.

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(Aba Knees-up grabs pantaloons from Aladdin and throws them at Widow Twankey, who catches them. Takes hold of Aladdin and bundles him off stage, whilst laughing evilly. Aba Knees-Up & Aladdin exit)

Widow Twankey: **(To herself with feeling)** Oh why, oh why, did he have to come back after all these years! I could kill him! **(Quickly takes down clothes line with pegs and clothes on. Puts wash powder box and laundry into wash basket. Exits with all props.)**

Scene 2 - Palace

(SFX. A short extract from ‘Arabian Nights’ theme music (as used in intro.) Or other traditional eastern music.)

Storyteller: Now beloved ones, we journey to Omar the Opulent’s opulent palace, where he has sent for his beautiful and youngest daughter, the Princess Rhododendron, which nobody, including himself, can spell.

(Omar enters carrying a prop of large ornate ornament of some kind. Put it down. Princess enters carrying a long, long piece of knitting, an artificial bird in a small cage, or piece of embroidery. Puts it down.)

Princess: You sent for me daddy?

Omar: Ah, Rhod, Rhod, Rhodydod, Rhodydodron, - my child, soon you will be of age, and it is time to find you a suitable husband.

Princess: Oh daddy, I don’t want to marry. I’m not in love with anyone, and I want to be free.

Omar: Free? Free! Nothing, and nobody is free my child, particularly you, my last, my most precious, and my most expensive daughter. If anything is free, it’s worthless!

Princess: I want to be free to be myself daddy. And I want to have fun!

Omar: **(Puzzled)** Fun?

Princess: Yes, fun daddy.

(Sings and dances around to selected extracts from ‘Girls Just Want to Have Fun’ by Cyndi Lauper).

Omar: **(Shakes head uncomprehendingly at Storyteller)** This is not the sort of music we play in the eighteenth century!

Storyteller: **(Stands)** You’re absolutely right your excellency. But young people today – never listen. **(Makes despairing action with hands.)**

Omar: **(To storyteller)** You’re right. I blame her mother, wife number seven. She had a mind of her own. **(Points to the storyteller’s book)** Is that in your book?

Princess: **(Folds arms. To father and storyteller.)** Can we get on!

(Storyteller shrugs. Sits.)

Omar: Oh Rhody, Rhody –

Princess: - dendron.

Omar: Is it really? That’s much better. Well Dendron, what about all the fun we have playing pin the tail on the camel, with the servants?

Princess: They’re really not happy about the pins, daddy.

Omar: And the falcon racing.

Princess: Nor that daddy. It always catches them, and flies off with their turbans. It makes me unhappy to hear them wailing.

Omar: **(Sighs in exasperated way.)** If you want entertainment, I will summon my dancing girls. **(Claps hands.)**

(Fatima of the Lots of Veils enters)

Omar: **(Looks to see if other dancers are following.)** Where are my other dancing girls Fatima?

Fatima: Shopping your excellency. It's the sales.

Omar: Sales? Why do they need sales? **(Proudly)** I have an enormous purse.

Fatima: And you are most generous with it your excellency, but they go to the sales because they like haggling.

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Omar: **(Makes a despairing gesture)** I shall never understand women! **(To Fatima)** Well, carry on Fatima!

(SFX. Play Marrakesh Belly Dance Percussion. Fatima dances an exotic belly dance, dropping off veils as she goes. Keep going for a short while.)

Princess: Stop!

(Fatima stops, mid wobble.)

Princess: **(To Omar)** Daddy, this is demeaning to Fatima. She is a person, not an object for entertainment.

Omar: **(Angry)** Of course she's an object for entertainment! **(Disparagingly)** Although this one is getting a bit long in the tooth. Each year, another veil!

Princess: That's why she's called Fatima of the Lots of Veils. She can't help being er – **(politely doesn't continue.)** Age comes to us all daddy. **(Sympathetically)** Poor Fatima, what a wasted life. She could have been a vet.

(Fatima wails loudly through her lots of veils. Storyteller leaves through pages of the book, scratching head, and looking puzzled.)

Omar: Enough of this nonsense Rhodi, Rhodi –

Princess: - dendron!

Omar: Dendron! You're a princess and you'll behave like one! I allow you far too much freedom. Your maid is too weak; she will be replaced. You will be confined to the palace and grounds. Tomorrow, I will send out a proclamation for the richest men in the kingdom to present themselves, and you may choose one – freely! **(Exits haughtily carrying ornament he entered with.)**

Princess: **(Burst into tears.)** Oh, daddy – I could kill you! **(Exits quickly with knitting, bird in cage, or embroidery, dabbing eyes.)**

Fatima: I could kill both of you! **(Exits, stomping off crossly.)**

Scene 3 - Outside palace

- Storyteller:** (Stands) Travel with me beloved ones, as we follow Aladdin, and his so- called uncle, to the walls of the palace.
- (Aladdin enters, followed by Aba Knees-Up.)
- Aba Knees-Up:** (Enters and walks to small side door of palace. Says as if a spell) ‘Open Sesame’. (To Aladdin. Orders.) You will enter undetected. Find the oil lamp and pass it to me. If you’re caught it will be off with your head!
- Aladdin:** On my head be it?
- Aba Knees-Up:** Off with your head be it!
- Aladdin:** That doesn’t sound very nice. Why is the lamp at the palace?
- Aba Knees-Up:** Long ago, one of my illustrious ancestors was a humble servant here and accidentally left it behind. It has great sentimental value to me. You will find it in the summer house just inside the wall. Go quickly. When you’ve got it, knock three times at this door (knocks on door three times) and I’ll let you out.
- (Pushes Aladdin through a narrow opening in the side door. Aladdin is pushed through narrow side door of backdrop.)
- Aba Knees-Up:** I hope the stupid youth won’t be long (rubs hands) I can’t wait to get my hands on the powerful magic lamp. When I do, the world will be mine, all mine!
- (Exits with a flash, SFX. a bang, and an evil cackle. Scene changes to Palace Garden. Gardener enters with a tray, basket or very small wheelbarrow of artificial flowers, plus small bush with artificial bird in, and proceeds to place them around artistically, creating the impression of a garden, and effecting a scene change. Also brings on any other small props symbolising garden. Not too slow or it will disrupt action. Exits. SFX. A snatch of tropical birdsong Aladdin emerges through side door in backdrop onto stage again, as if he is now in the palace garden. Looks around. Mimes bending and sniffing a flower. Hears footsteps and sobbing. Grabs the bush type plant and holds it up in front of his face and upper body.)
- Princess:** (Enters, dabbing eyes with sleeve, and making an occasional sob.) Oh misery. What does life hold for me. I’m to be a prisoner of one man or another! If only I was free, free as this little bird (transfers bird in bush onto her finger. Sighs. Sniffs. Wipes eyes and nose on her sleeve.)
- (Aladdin through or around bush, offers her the large handkerchief marked with letter ‘A’.)
- Princess:** (Takes handkerchief.) Thank you. (Then stares at bush, and then down at pair of legs. Aladdin lowers bush. Aladdin & Princess stare at each other.)
- Princess:** Are you – a new gardener?
- Storyteller:** (Stands) Remember I told you that Aladdin was as honest as the day was long?
- Aladdin:** (To Princess honestly admitting) No I’m er, not a new gardener.
- Storyteller:** And possibly a little dim.

Aladdin: **(Folds arms, looks at storyteller.)** Do you mind!

Storyteller: **(Shrugs)** Most likely his age. **(Sits)**

Princess: You know that my father will cut off your head if he catches you looking at me for even a minute!

Aladdin: **(Romantically)** For looking at you, it will be worth every second, every millisecond. **(Looks at bird)** You er wish you were as free as a bird?

Princess: Yes. Would you mind taking it, it's pooped on my finger. **(Passes bird to Aladdin. Wipes her finger with the handkerchief. Keeps handkerchief.)**

(Aladdin takes bird and returns it to bush.)

Princess: What are you doing here?

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Aladdin: My uncle's old ancestor, left his oil lamp in the summer house when he worked here. He's asked me to collect it.

Princess: **(Indicates)** Well, the summer house is just over there. Take it; we have no need for old lamps.

(Princess Rhododendron & Aladdin stand staring at each other romantically.)

Aladdin: Before I go, may I just say, that – I love you.

Princess: **(Ironically)** Love? Are you sure you don't just want to catch me and put me in a golden cage?

Aladdin: **(Romantically)** I wouldn't put you in any kind of cage, although I might be tempted to place you on a pedestal.

Princess: **(Angrily)** Isn't that like an invisible cage?

Aladdin: **(Curiously)** So, tell me what you want, what you really really want?

(SFX. Play 'Wannabe', or extract, by Spice Girls. Princess sings or mimes, making actions to 'Wannabe'. Aladdin sings or mimes, *sharing and interacting with lyrics, and with Princess.)

(Song ends. Storyteller, puzzled expression. Scratches head.)

Aladdin: I agree.

Princess: You agree?

Aladdin: Yes. I agree. But it would never work, unless –

Princess: Unless?

Aladdin: I'm just a poor laundry boy. But I will find riches and jewels then come and claim you as my bride. The life of a poor laundry boy's wife wouldn't appeal I suppose?

Princess: No, because then a washtub would become my cage.

Aladdin: **(Takes Princess's hand)** I thought not. Well then goodbye for now my little bird. I'll come and claim you when I can go to your father as a rich man and ask him for your hand; and the rest of you of course.

(Storyteller rolls his eyes, as if to say 'what a twit'. Aladdin kisses the Princess.)

Princess: **(Kisses Aladdin back.)** Goodbye

(Aladdin picks up bush and walks with it in front of him as disguise. Exits quickly.)

Princess: **(To self)** Oh, I forgot to ask his name! **(Looks at handkerchief, notices the embroidered 'A', and reads in a romantic way.)** 'A'. 'A' is for? **(Exits.)**

(Gardener enters with tray, basket or very small wheelbarrow. Looks displeased with the flowers. Removes them all, thus effecting scene change. Briefly looks at empty space, making gestures with hands, as if planning their replacements. Exits. Scene changed to Outside Palace Garden. SFX. Flash and bang as Aba Knees-Up, enters.)

Aba Knees-Up: **(Paces up and down impatiently.)** The stupid boy! What can he be doing? How long does it take to collect a lamp?

Krithi: **(Enters. Looks surprised to see Aba Knees-Up)** Cousin! What are you doing here? I thought you were in lands far away.

Aba Knees-Up: I have big plans Krithi. Soon I will become the richest man in the world, and I plan to marry the Princess Rhododendron. I might even manage to spell it.

Storyteller: **(Stands)** I doubt it.

Aba Knees-Up: **(To storyteller)** You keep out of it!

(Storyteller shrugs. Sits.)

Krithi: I may be able to help you cousin. I've been taken on as a new maid to Princess Rhododendron. I *could* use my hypnotic skills to influence her.

Aba Knees-Up: **(Ironically)** And what do you expect out of it, cousin dear?

Krithi: Money and jewels – and sweets.

Aba Knees-Up: Very well. When I've succeeded, I'll present myself to Omar the Opulent as a suitable suitor. You will persuade the princess that I'm the one to marry. I still remember you hypnotising me as a child to steal my sweets.

Krithi: You have a long memory cousin.

Aba Knees-Up: I have as far as sweets are concerned. **(Goes into reverie)** Fry's Turkish Delight was my favourite.

(Sighs and licks lips as SFX. the tune of Fry's Turkish Delight begins playing. Fatima of the Lots of Veils enters as if entering into Aba Knees-Up's reverie, does a wobbly belly dance.)

Aba Knees-Up: **(Shudders. Awakes from chocolate reverie.)** Horrible! I've suddenly gone off Fry's Turkish Delight.

Fatima: (To self, upset. The other two do not overhear) How rude! I've given my life to art! I could kill him (Withdraws a long hat pin from somewhere on her costume. Murderous expression) with my hat pin poisoned with the juice of the Upas tree! (Exits)

Aba Knees-Up: (To Krithi, urgently) Now go! We shouldn't be seen together.
(Krithi exits. SFX. Heavy marching of feet as if palace guards are patrolling palace grounds.)

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Guards: (Off-Stage) 'Stop Thief'! 'Catch him'! 'Don't let him get away!'
(SFX. Heavy running footsteps of palace guards.)

Aba Knees-Up: Curses! The stupid youth is bound to be caught! If the fool blabs, I mustn't be caught here outside the palace! May he be boiled in oil! (Exits)
(SFX. Flash and bang as Aba Knees-Up, exits.)

Scene 4 - Laundry

- Storyteller:** (Stands) Back at the laundry, poor old Widow Twankey, is not only taking in washing and ironing, and trying to make a little money on the side but having to effect a scene change too. (Sits)
- Widow Twankey:** (Enters lugging a basket of washing, and a modern clothes ailer. Puts up ailer. Points to ailer. Turns to audience. Smiles and speaks as if on shopping channel.) 'Problems with your washing line? If like me you're tired of pegging out on your old sisal rope, buy our 'non-hairy-carey-airy-fairy-dryer'. Only 3.95206 dinars – (points to member of audience) or one UK pound to you sir - but hurry, stocks are low!'
- Storyteller:** (Stands. Points to ailer) The thing's collapsed three times this morning.
- Widow Twankey:** (To storyteller) Whose side are you on? Here am I a poor widow woman trying to raise a few dinars, for a bit of dinner for my son and myself, and – and – (breaks off upset).
- Storyteller:** (To audience) OK, it's only collapsed twice; but it's the job of the storyteller to embellish and exaggerate.
- Widow Twankey:** (To storyteller crossly.) Hyperbole.
- Storyteller:** (Haughtily) And the same to you madam!
- Widow Twankey:** (Dabs eyes. To storyteller) You know, I'm so worried about Aladdin. (Points at story book) I suppose you couldn't look what comes next on your page, and let me know if he's alright?
- Storyteller:** Very well. (Read from page as if announcing. Gesture towards entrance.) 'Enter oracle.'
- Widow Twankey:** Don't be silly, there are no rivers around here. And what would Aladdin be doing in one?
- Storyteller:** Oracle – not coracle! (Sits)
- Farviz the Oracle:** (Enters. Makes traditional eastern greeting) Greetings old dhobi woman. I am Farviz the Oracle. I see that you have worries pressing heavily upon you.
- Widow Twankey:** Less of the old please, but yes, I have very heavy worries. I'm so worried about my son Aladdin. His wicked uncle took him to do an errand, and neither have returned.
- Farviz the Oracle:** If you put money into my hand, I will see, what I can see. The more money I see, the further I see.
- Widow Twankey:** (Gets a coin from purse and gives to Farviz) I see what you mean. Here's one dinar.
- Farviz the Oracle:** (Looks at coin. Shakes head sadly) I won't be able to see very far with one dinar. Not far at all.
- Widow Twankey:** I'm only a poor widow. I can throw in some buttons and a dhoti wash.
- Farviz the Oracle:** I'm not taking my dhoti off for anyone!
- Widow Twankey:** You can bring it in next week.

Farviz the Oracle: Done! **(Goes into a trance. Makes a humming noise.)**
(Widow Twankey waits hopefully)

Farviz the Oracle: **(Still in trance, making humming noise.)** Ah, I see him! I see the boy Aladdin. He has been in great danger, but he has escaped.

Widow Twankey: He's escaped; oh, thank goodness. Where is he now?

Farviz the Oracle: He is quite nearby. Soon you will have the joy of embracing your dear son.

Widow Twankey: Thank you. I shall tell his wicked uncle what I think of him when I see him!

Farviz the Oracle: **(Puts out hand)** To engage my visage upon the wicked uncle, I need another dinar - or a turban wash.

Widow Twankey: I've got quite enough washing thank you, and if I never see Aba Knees-Up and his blooming oil lamp again, it will be too soon!

Farviz the Oracle: **(Suddenly alert at mention of Aba Knees-Up and lamp)** Blooming oil lamp you say?

Widow Twankey: **(Grumbling)** Yes – what's so special about an old oil lamp, that he needed help from my boy, I can't imagine. **(Wanders off to her wash basket and begins sorting.)**

Farviz the Oracle: **(To self excitedly)** Could it be *the* lamp? Could it be *the* fabled magic lamp? I must possess it! Even if I have to kill Aba Knees-Up, the most wicked magician in the east! For with the lamp in my hands, I shall possess a far greater magic! **(Exits)**

Widow Twankey: **(Returns from sorting washing. Looks at ring on her finger. Shows audience.)** It's a pretty ring isn't it. The stone looks like a ruby. **(Runs finger over metal.)** I wonder if it's gold? It's a bit dull. I'll give it a rub. **(Rubs ring on her dress or apron.)**

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(SFX. A loud snap or bang, as if from a Christmas cracker.)

Spirit of the Ring: **(Enters hopping and skipping in a bubbly way, holding half of a Christmas cracker.)** Surprise! **(Extracts tiny slip of paper from inside cracker and pretends to read it)** I say, I say, I say: 'What do you call a deaf rhinoceros?'

Widow Twankey: **(Bewildered)** I've really no idea.

Spirit of the Ring: **(Splits sides laughing as reads the answer.)** 'Anything you like, it can't hear you!'
(Widow Twankey Stares)

Spirit of the Ring: Here's another. **(Pretends to read from the tiny slip of paper)** 'What's orange and sounds like a parrot?'

Widow Twankey: **(Stares)** I don't know.

Spirit of the Ring: **(Splits sides laughing as reads the answer)** 'A carrot!'

Widow Twankey: **(Doubtfully)** Are you, are you a genie?

Spirit of the Ring: No, I'm the Spirit of the Christmas Cracker Ring. **(Points to the ring on Widow Twankey's finger).**

Widow Twankey: **(Looks at ring on her finger. Almost to herself)** So that's where Aba Knees-Up got it; out of a cracker; what a cheapskate!

Spirit of the Ring: Now it's time for your brain teaser: **(Pretends to read from the tiny slip of paper)** 'There's an ancient invention still used in some parts of the world, that allows people to see through walls. What is it?'

Widow Twankey: I don't know.

Spirit of the Ring: **(Pretends to read from the tiny slip of paper)** 'A window' – tee hee. There's one brain teaser left. You get two jokes and two brain teasers or one fun fact inside each cracker. Ready?

Widow Twankey: **(Getting into the swing of it.)** Yes, ready.

Spirit of the Ring: **(Pretends to read from the tiny slip of paper)** 'If you took five chocolates from a box which contained twenty-one chocolates, how many chocolates would you have?'

Widow Twankey: **(Grabs a selection of twenty-one amusing washing type objects, such as pegs, socks, handkerchiefs, and lays them out. Removes five and counts remainder. Says with triumph)** Sixteen!

Spirit of the Ring: **(Glances at tiny slip of paper)** No. Five. You took five chocolates, so you have five! **(Giggles with delight).**

Widow Twankey: **(Getting into the swing of things)** Oh, that was a trick one. Another!

Spirit of the Ring: **(Rather sadly)** No, that's sufficient, or you will tire of me. That's how I ended up as spirit of the ring. I rejected the advances of the evil magician Aba Knees-Up, and he conjured me inside this ring. He thought it would be amusing.

Widow Twankey: So, you can never escape?

Spirit of the Ring: **(Wistfully)** Only if Aba Knees-Up dies. **(Exits hopping and skipping in a bubbly way.)**

(Widow Twankey deep in thought, gathers up airer, and washing ephemera, thus effecting a scene change, and exits.)

Scene 5 - Palace

- Storyteller:** Now beloved we travel, as if by magic carpet to the palace, where Krithi, cousin to the wicked Aba Knees-Up has obtained the position of maid to Princess Rhododendron.
- (SFX. Snatch of theme tune, or other traditional eastern music. Omar enters holding the oil lamp and frowning. Princess enters with a book with a colourful cover. Krithi enters)**
- Omar:** **(To Princess)** The guards discovered a thief in the palace gardens. The rogue was carrying this oil lamp.
- Princess:** **(Anxiously)** Is he alright?
- Omar:** What?!
- Princess:** **(Quickly)** I mean, is he sane?
- Omar:** Well, he can't be very bright to steal an old oil lamp!
- Princess:** **(Anxiously)** I mean, was he, was he apprehended?
- Omar:** No. The fellow dropped the lamp as he was pursued and clambered up a fig tree, over the wall and away.
- (Princess sigh of relief. Krithi notices the sigh of relief, and looks at the Princess suspiciously.)**
- Princess:** May I have the oil lamp daddy? It is so very quaint.
- Omar:** Certainly not! I'll buy you a diamond studded oil lamp if you wish, but you're not having this dirty old thing.
- Princess:** Oh, pretty please daddy; it's not much to ask, especially as I'm not allowed into the town.
- Omar:** Oh, very well. Get Krithi to carry it for you. **(To Krithi. Orders regally)** Clean it before the princess touches it.
- Krithi:** **(Places hands together and bows slightly, making eastern sign of respect)** Your wish is my command your excellency.
- Omar:(Moves to pass lamp to Krithi, but the princess intervenes and takes it.)**
- Princess:** **(Intervenes as Omar is passing lamp to Krithi. Clutches oil lamp to her chest)** I want it dirty! It is reminiscent of telling tales around glowing campfires under a million stars in the sapphire blue desert night.
- Omar:** **(Points to her book sternly)** You've been reading too many novels! Any more of this and I'll take your library ticket away.
- Princess:** **(Clutches oil lamp to chest)** Thank you daddy.
- Omar:** Now then, to the marriage business; there are many suitors for your hand my daughter. The exchequer has orders to filter out those with insufficient riches, gold and jewels.
- Krithi:** **(Grabs her opportunity. Bows slightly)** May I be so bold as to address your excellency?

Omar: **(Makes a haughty royal signal of consent)** Carry on.

Krithi: There is a man you may not have heard of, who can surpass the riches of the greatest of them.

Omar: What is this man's name?

Krithi: Aba Knees-Up. **(Takes off her jewelled necklace)** This necklace is but a trinket he handed me, for once opening a door for him.

(Omar looks down his nose at necklace in Krithi's hand. Princess glances at necklace. Krithi begins to swing necklace from side to side hypnotically in front of Omar and Princess. Omar & Princess eyes and heads start to follow the swing of the necklace.)

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Krithi: You are feeling sleepy, very very sleepy.

(Omar & Princess begin to yawn, and enter into a trance.)

Krithi: That is good. **(Speaks in a hypnotic persuasive way)** You will remember the name Aba Knees-Up. When you think of the name Aba Knees-Up, you will think of great riches, jewels, camels, chocolates. When you hear the name Aba Knees-Up you will consider him a suitable husband for Princess Rhododendron. When you awake in the count of three, you will think admiringly of the name of Aba Knees-Up. **(Counts slowly)** One, two, three.

(Omar the Opulent & Princess come around suddenly. Blink. Look bewildered for a second or two.)

Omar: **(Frowns, then remembers what he was saying.)** As I was saying – as I was saying, the exchequer will filter out unsuitable poor applicants for the hand of my beautiful expensive daughter. The name of Aba Knees-Up comes to mind. Now where have I heard that name before?

Princess: I don't know daddy. **(Frowns)** I've heard it somewhere too. But as I've told you, I'm not in love. **(To self confusedly)** Or am I? Oh, where have I heard that name?

Omar: **(Commands Krithi)** Send for the man Aba Knees-Up. I wish to speak with him. I wish to arrange a wedding!

Krithi: I will endeavour to send word your excellency. **(Makes sign of respect to Omar.)**

(Omar exits regally.)

Princess: **(To Krithi)** I have a headache. I want to be alone. You may have a couple of hours off.

Krithi: I will tidy your room and turn your bed down. **(Picks up the book the Princess brought in with her.)** I'll take your book back. **(Slight bow and sign of respect. Exits.)**

Princess: **(To self)** Aba Knees-Up. Where have I heard that name! **(Suddenly gasps)** The handkerchief! The 'A' embroidered upon the handkerchief given to me in the garden must stand for Aba; Aba Knees-Up! **(Puzzled)** But the young man said he was a

poor laundry boy. Perhaps he was testing me to see if I could love him for himself? **(Lovingly)** Oh, my dearest silly Aba, of course I would! **(Looks at oil lamp curiously. To audience)** I wonder if it's true what's written in storybooks, about a genie living inside a magic lamp, who can grant wishes?

Storyteller: **(Stands)** It's quite true.

Princess: **(Excited. To audience.)** Shall I rub it?

Storyteller: You know you're going to. **(Sits)**

Princess: **(To storyteller, irritated)** Shush!

(Awaits audience reaction)

Princess: Then I will! **(Rubs lamp with hem of costume or sleeve.)**

(Lights down. SFX. Extract from musical intro to 'Mastermind'. 'Approaching Menace' by Neil Richardson. Genius of the Lamp enters like a 'Mastermind' competitor. Stands. Spotlight falls on Genius of the Lamp. Keep spotlight on. Lights up.)

Princess: **(Stares perplexed.)** Who are you?

Storyteller: **(Stands, puzzled.)** Yes, who are you? **(Sits)**

(Genius of the Lamp stands under spotlight.)

Genius: I am the genius of the lamp. Ready for my first question.

Princess: I'm confused!

Genius: Is that a specialised question, Or from the general selection?

Princess: **(Confusedly turns to storyteller)** Are we on Mastermind?

Genius: Mastermind it is. I'm ready to quiz.

(Storyteller scratches head. Flicks through pages of story book in puzzled way. Shrugs.)

Princess: **(Frowns)** Oh dear!

Genius: Subject matter deer: Reindeer, Muntjak, Fallow, Moose. Family, genus Cervidae. **(Pronounce to rhyme with UK)**

Princess: That's not what I meant! **(Stamps foot crossly)** Oh rats!

Genius: Subject matter rats: Family genus Muridae **(Pronounce to rhyme with UK)** Brown rats, black rats. Live in UK, Eat vegetables, seeds and nuts, Young ones are called pups.

Princess: **(Clasps head with hands)** Woe is me!

Genius: That is a statement, not a question. Next question.

Princess: **(Demands)** Where is the genie who grants wishes?

Genius: The genie tricked me and went free, Now I'm stuck till eternity.

Princess: There's no spell that can undo it?

Genius: That is a rhetorical question, next.

Princess: **(Tuts annoyed. Tries again)** Can the spell be broken?

Genius: I can be set free and released, when Aba Knees-Up is deceased.

(Lights down. Spotlight on empty space. Genius exits with brief extract of 'Mastermind' intro music. Spotlight off and lights up.)

Princess: **(Gasps)** When Aba Knees-Up is deceased? Oh no! My darling Aba Knees-Up, is in peril! I'll hide a message inside the lamp and send Krithi with it to that laundry he spoke about. **(Exits hurriedly with lamp.)**

Scene 6 - Outside Palace

- Storyteller:** **(Stands)** Now dear ones, we step outside the Palace, where Krithi is on her way to deliver the oil lamp to the town laundry. But her heart is full of suspicion about the handkerchief with the embroidered letter 'A' she discovered below the Princess's pillow. **(Sits)**
- Krithi:** **(Enters with oil lamp. Puts lamp down. Gets handkerchief from pocket and looks at the embroidered 'A'. Speaks angrily to self)** The handkerchief I discovered under the princess's pillow belongs to Aba Knees-Up! It would seem that my duplicitous cousin is already wooing her on the sly. He was always tricky. When he's won her, I bet he won't reward me as he promised with money, jewels and sweets. **(Eyes narrowed)** Well, I have my own special way of dealing with deceivers! **(Looks sinisterly at jewelled ring on her finger. Flips open top of ring, looks in cavity briefly, and closes top. Make sure the audience see.)**
- (Farviz the Oracle enters back of stage and keeps quiet, eavesdropping on Krithi.)**
- Krithi:** **(Looks at oil lamp, puzzled. Still talking to self)** Was it Aba Knees-Up who dropped the lamp in the palace garden? **(Angrily)** If so, no doubt the princess has an arrangement with him to collect it from the laundry! I shan't deliver it! But what excuse can I give?
- Farviz the Oracle:** **(Enters further onto stage. Greets in eastern way. Addresses Krithi craftily)** Greetings beautiful lady. I am Farviz the Oracle. My visage perceives that you have a heavy heart.
- Krithi:** That is true old Oracle.
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- Farviz the Oracle:** **(Persuasively)** If you put money into my hand, I will see, what I can see to help you. The more money I see, the further I see.
- (Krithi gets out purse and sorts a few copper-coloured coins into her hand.)**
- Farviz the Oracle:** **(Looks at coins that Krithi is extracting. Shakes head sadly)** I won't be able to see very far with coins of base metal. Hardly as far as I can spit. I'm sure a fine lady such as yourself can find silver in your purse for an esteemed oracle such as myself.
- (Krithi from purse extracts a couple of silver coins. Hands to Farviz.)**
- Farviz the Oracle:** **(Nods satisfied. Goes into trance, makes a humming noise.)** Ah, I see that the old lamp is giving you much grief. You do not want to deliver it to the laundry, and yet you do not know what to do with it.
- Krithi:** That is so.
- Farviz the Oracle:** **(Makes another humming noise.)** Ah yes, the future fog is clearing. I see you giving the task of delivering the lamp to another; but they will fail in their duty, leaving you with an excuse and a clear conscience. **(Smiles)** Perhaps dear lady I can facilitate that, leaving you to slumber beautifully in your bed with untroubled dreams. **(Bows flatteringly)**

Krithi: It certainly would make me feel better. I will tell the prin – **(stops herself saying ‘princess’)** – tell the person, if they ask, that it is being delivered by another. **(Puts lamp down on floor or surface. Exits.)**

Farviz the Oracle: **(Looks at lamp with awe.)** I have the lamp. I Farviz the Oracle am possessor of the most powerful, most wonderful, most magical lamp. **(Dances ecstatically with glee.)**

(Aladdin enters. Notices with surprise the lamp left lying on floor. Casually picks it up and exits with it behind Farviz, who is still prancing about. Farviz does not notice.)

Farviz the Oracle: **(Wanders in reverie to front of stage. Clasps hands in joy. Talks to self)** What will I ask of the genie inside the lamp? For jewels? Yes! For riches beyond compare? Yes! Yes! **(Turns around to look at where lamp was. Hunts around stage disbelievingly. Cries loudly in anguish)** No! No! I shall kill the thief who has stolen my lamp **(Looks sinisterly at vial hanging from his necklace; ensures the audience sees)** with my vial of instant death! **(Exits in a frenzy of fury.)**

(Scene changes to laundry)

Widow Twankey: **(Enters with basket of washing and a big packet with ‘Scorpion Proof Laundry Net’ written on. Gets out thin net and holds it up to audience. Smiles and addresses them as if on tv shopping channel)** ‘Problem with scorpions? With our elasticated adaptable laundry net you need never worry about deadly Deathstalker Scorpions skulking in your laundry basket.’

(Aladdin enters. Wait until widow finishes.)

Widow Twankey: ‘Pull on your drawers in the morning ladies, with confidence and attitude. **(To audience member)** Special offer to you madam, 1,000 dinars – but hurry, the nets are flying off the shelves.’ **(Turns to and embraces Aladdin)** Oh Aladdin, I’m so happy you’re home! I was so worried, but then the old oracle prophesied it would be alright.

Aladdin: Yes, he saw me clambering back over the palace wall. **(Put down lamp.)**

Widow Twankey: **(Crossly)** Oh, the old fraud! I paid him one dinar and a credit note for a dhoti wash for that!

Aladdin: **(Looks curiously at Scorpion Proof Laundry Net. Holds it up and looks through the thin net)** Have you ever found a deathly deathstalker scorpion in your laundry basket mother?

Widow Twankey: A few times; they’re nasty if they’re disturbed. I use my washing tongs to lift them out. The blighters can climb up the sides right to the top. I’ll cover the basket with the scorpion proof laundry net, so they can’t get in. **(Secures the elasticated thin net over the laundry basket. Looks at lamp.)** Is that the lamp your uncle asked you to get?

Aladdin: Yes. The guards chased me, and I dropped it; but then I found it again.

Widow Twankey: **(Horried)** Chased by the guards! Whatever next!

Aladdin: I met the beautiful Princess Rhododendron. When I’m rich I’m going to ask her father for her hand in marriage!

Widow Twankey: Oh Aladdin! Just be thankful you escaped with your head. **(Looks round)** Where's Aba Knees-Up got to?

Aladdin: I don't know. He just disappeared.

Widow Twankey: **(Disparagingly)** How like him to leave his own sss – sss - **(accidentally hisses when she stops herself from saying 'son')** – nephew to face the music!

Aladdin: **(Stares at Widow)** Mother, why are you hissing?

Widow Twankey: **(Recovers quickly)** It's, just a bit of a hissy fit. You know I could do with a brew up after all this excitement. **(To storyteller as an afterthought)** Has tea been invented yet?

Storyteller: **(Stands)** Yes.

Widow Twankey: **(To storyteller)** Thank goodness for that. Do you want one?

Storyteller: Go on then. No sugar. **(Stay in character. Walk over to Widow Twankey, and prepare to exit with her. Help her to carry off laundry props)**

Widow Twankey: **(Stay in character. Carry off laundry props with storyteller. Asks storyteller as they both exit stage)** Has sugar been invented yet?

(Aladdin Stands looking puzzled after Widow. Exits with lamp.)

(Re interval: if not convenient to take interval here, after the storyteller has replied 'yes' to tea question, Widow Twankey should just say 'thank goodness for that' and exit; then continue with Aladdin exiting as in script and continue)

INTERVAL

Act 2

Scene 1 - Outside Palace

(SFX. Play ‘Arabian Nights’ theme tune, or extract.)

Storyteller: **(Enters. Takes seat. Addresses audience)** Now dearly beloved, Aladdin has possession of the fabled lamp, but far from bringing him happiness, his delight is cast down by a most gloomy discovery.

Aladdin: **(Enters with lamp. Innocently)** I expect my uncle Aba Knees-Up will collect his lamp soon, and I can keep the ring. **(Observes lamp)** It’s a grubby old lamp. **(Reminiscing)** When I was little, mother used to tell me stories about a magic lamp. There was a genie living inside who could grant three wishes. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if this was a magic lamp? **(To audience)** Shall I give it a rub, and see?

Audience: Yes.

Storyteller: **(Stands)** Go on – you know you’re going to!

Aladdin: **(Looks at storyteller, annoyed)** Do you mind!

(Storyteller sits. Aladdin rubs lamp with his sleeve. Lights down. SFX. Music intro to ‘Mastermind’. Genius enters like a ‘Mastermind’ competitor. Stands. Spotlight falls on Genius of the Lamp. Keep spotlight on. Lights up.)

Aladdin: **(Amazed.)** Who are you?

Genius: The Genius of the Lamp *am I*, I have three answers to supply. That was question number one

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Aladdin: **(Protests)** But, that wasn’t a proper question!

Genius: Yes, it was, and now it’s gone. **(To rhyme with number ‘one’)**

Aladdin: **(Cautions self.)** I’d better be careful what I wish for. **(To Genius)** – Er question number two then. How can I become rich enough to marry the princess?

Genius: Buy low and sell high, is a handy guideline to apply.

Aladdin: But, but **(Stops himself. Scratches head.)** Question number three. **(Smiles)** Tell me – does Princess Rhododendron love me?

Genius: The Princess loves another man, you’ll find her note inside this can.

Aladdin: **(Astounded, bursts out)** You’re wrong! She loves me, I know she does!

Genius: I’ve answered every single question, It’s your duty to digest ‘em! **(Exits)**

(Lights down. Spotlight on empty space. Genius exits with brief extract of ‘Mastermind’ intro music. Spotlight off and lights up.)

Aladdin: **(Looks at lamp and notices a note in the spout. Removes and reads it aloud.)** ‘Aba Knees-Up, my own, my dear one, since we met you are constantly on my mind. I am sending a message as I have discovered you are in great peril. Get rid of

the lamp as soon as you can, and you will be safe. From your very own Princess Rhodi.' **(Stunned. Bursts out)** Oh no! My darling Princess Rhododendron loves Aba Knees-Up! She even signs herself Rhodi! The lamp has been used to send messages between them! I have been used as a fool!

Storyteller: **(Stands)** No comment. **(Sits.)**

Aladdin: **(Gives storyteller an offended look)** Oh, how I hate my uncle! I could kill him. **(Looks at note. Crumples it up slowly and puts it in his pocket.)** I shall find him and give him the lamp! **(Exits with lamp.)**

(SFX. Flash and bang as Aba Knees-Up, enters.)

Aba Knees-Up: **(Enters)** Aladdin must have escaped with the lamp, for there have been no public executions today. When it is in my possession, I shall waste no time giving the genie orders for my three wishes; riches, riches, and more riches! **(Evil laugh.)** Then I shall marry Princess Rhododendron; Omar the Opulent will meet with a most fortunate accident; and I shall become Sultan. My future is as good as written.

Storyteller: **(Stands. Points to book)** It is already written.

Aba Knees-Up: **(Arrogantly)** What does it say?

Storyteller: I can't read that far. **(Sits)**

Aba Knees-Up: **(Annoyed)** Pah! Who needs a storyteller. I shall re-write the book! **(Muses to self)** I may take more wives. **(Sudden worried frown)** It must not be discovered that in my youth I married the old washerwoman. I only did it to spite my brother who loved her. **(Shrugs)** Anyway, he married her after I disappeared, presumed dead. **(Frowns)** The widow would be a severe embarrassment to me now. I need to be rid of her! **(Rubs chin thoughtfully)** A nasty slip while pushing her washing through the mangle? That would slim her down a bit! Has Aladdin guessed I wonder? If so, he may meet a fortunate accident too! **(Long evil laugh. Exits.)**

(SFX. Flash and bang as Aba Knees-Up, exits. Scene changed to Palace. Omar enters with a flashy looking ornament to set scene. Princess enters with the even longer piece of knitting. Krithi enters carrying the end of the long, long, piece of knitting, like a train.)

Omar: **(To Krithi)** You have sent for the man Aba Knees-Up?

Krithi: **(Bows head)** Yes, your excellency. He arrives later.

Omar: Good, then we shall discuss jewels, gold and camels

Krithi: **(Craftily)** When I delivered your message, Aba Knees-Up gave me a small token of thanks. It is pretty is it not? **(Removes a different flashy necklace from her neck. Starts to swing it backwards and forwards, trying to hypnotise the pair.)**

(Princess stares at necklace. Her eyes start to follow it, as if about to go into a trance.)

Omar: **(Distracted by a sudden idea. Nudges Princess Rhododendron)** I have just had a marvellous idea!

Princess: **(Blinks as if coming round.)** Oh – oh, what is it daddy?

(Krithi grits her teeth, and puts necklace back on.)

Omar: **(Enthusiastic)** When Aba Knees-Up comes, we will have a ‘walk about’ the town. I’ve heard it is the fashionable thing to do.

Princess: **(A sudden thought)** Can we include the laundry daddy?

Omar: **(Taken aback)** The laundry?

Princess: Yes. It is where the ordinary people go to have their clothes washed. – It is my wish before I am married – and, and **(lies)** the old Oracle says it is auspicious for a clean start.

Omar: What a curious request! **(Amiably)** Well, why not!

Krithi: **(Devious)** Is that wise your excellency? There are many germs at the laundry.
(Omar frowns and opens mouth. He is forestalled by Princess Rhododendron.)

Princess: It is alright daddy! I have the very latest thing from the Amazon – it is called a hand sanitiser. It kills germs. **(Gets hand sanitiser from bodice or pocket and shows Omar.)**

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Omar: **(takes sanitiser and has a squirt. Rubs hands together. He is quite taken with it.)** Kills germs, well I never! **(To Krithi, orders)** Order many more bottles from the Amazon. Tell the man Aba Knees-Up we shall meet him at the laundry.

Krithi: **(Bows head)** Yes, your excellency.
(Omar exits regally carrying ornament he entered with. Princess picks up her knitting and exits. Krithi picks up end of knitting and carries it after Princess like a train. Her expression is thoughtful.)

Scene 2 - Laundry

- Storyteller:** (Stands) Now dear ones, our journey continues at the laundry of the old widow, where there is great excitement over the impending visit of Omar the Opulent and his entourage. (Sits)
- (Widow Twankey enters dragging laundry basket, bucket and plunger. Checks around side of basket that elastic of Scorpion Proof Laundry Net is taut. *She does not at any stage, touch the top of the laundry basket.
- Widow Twankey:** (To audience) I'm all of a dither. Who do you think is coming to see us?
- Storyteller:** (Stands) Omar the Opulent – I've just told them! (Sits)
- Widow Twankey:** (Looks crossly at storyteller. Emphasises 'And') And? And? His daughter, the beautiful Princess Rhododendron! Aladdin will be so happy to see her; not that it will him much good. He has as much chance of winning her as, as -
- Storyteller:** (Stands) Spelling it? (Sits)
- Widow Twankey:** (Ignores storyteller) I don't know where Aladdin's got to with the lamp. Aba Knees-Up has been in a rage looking for him.
- (Aladdin enters with lamp)
- Widow Twankey:** There you are Aladdin! Have you washed behind your ears? Omar the Opulent will be here before we know it.
- Aladdin:** Why – is he going to look behind my ears?
- Aba Knees-Up:** (Enters with a flash and a bang. To Aladdin roughly) What has delayed you with the lamp? Give it to me.
- Aladdin:** (Thrusts lamp at Aba Knees-Up) Take it. Why would I want it! I shall keep the ring.
- (Widow Twankey hands Aladdin the ring.)
- Aba Knees-Up:** (Looks at Aladdin suspiciously. Takes the lamp. Puts lamp down somewhere near to Widow Twankey.) Omar the Opulent will soon be here, for we have a rendezvous. I am to become his son-in-law.
- Aladdin:** (Tragically) So – it's true! She loves you!
- (SFX. Royal fanfare. Omar enters regally. Widow Twankey, Aladdin and Aba Knees-Up bow their heads. Princess enters. Krithi enters. Fatima of the Lots of Veils enters. Farviz the Oracle enters)
- Omar:** (Looks around haughtily) So, this is a laundry?
- Widow Twankey:** Yes, your excellency. I have 98% satisfaction on Trip Advisor.
- Omar:** (Nods absently) Hmm, hmm. (Looks around) Now, where is the man Aba Knees-Up, the richest man in the East.
- Aba Knees-Up:** (Steps forward proudly. Bows head) I am here your excellency.
- Princess:** (Stares at Aba Knees-Up. Gasps) That is not Aba Knees-Up daddy! (Points to Aladdin) There is Aba Knees-Up!

Aba Knees-Up: (To Princess) You are mistaken my Princess. That poor and idle youth is Aladdin, the worthless son of the washerwoman.

Princess: (Protests) But 'A' is for... 'A' is for – (frowns puzzled.)

Omar: 'A' is for Aba Knees-Up! Have you forgotten how to spell my daughter! (Claps hands for attention) But before business, entertainment! Bring on my dancing girls!

Fatima: (To Omar) The other girls will be along soon your excellency.

Omar: (Irritated) Why is it women cannot be on time? Well, carry on Fatima.

(SFX. Play Marrakesh Belly Dance Percussion. Fatima dances a short wobbly belly dance.)

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Aladdin: (Moves forward with ring. To Omar) Please allow me to present the princess with a pretty ring on her betrothal.

Omar: (To Krithi. Orders) Take it and clean it. (Proudly to Aba Knees-Up) I have a special solution that kills germs. It comes straight from the Amazon. You open the lid and rub your hands with the solution. (To Krithi. Orders) Show them. Hand out the bottles.

(Krithi demonstrates use of a hand sanitiser. Hands Aba Knees-Up a bottle. Aba Knees-Up looks suspiciously at Krithi. Passes sanitiser to next person in line. Cast all pass hand sanitisers to next in line, until everyone has one, uttering words of appreciation.)

Widow Twankey: Ooh lovely. (Uses hand sanitiser.)

Fatima: Thank you. (Applies hand sanitiser.)

Farviz the Oracle: This is most auspicious. (Uses hand sanitiser.)

(Krithi hands Aladdin a bottle.)

Aladdin: Thank you. (Uses hand sanitiser.)

Aba Knees-Up: (Boasts) This will be most useful on my long journeys to my diamond mines. (Uses hand sanitiser.)

(Omar nods with satisfaction. Krithi takes ring from Aladdin, rubs it with hand sanitiser, and hands to Princess, who puts it on.)

(SFX. A loud snap or bang, as if from a Christmas cracker. Cast all jump with surprise. Spirit of the Ring enters hopping and skipping towards the Princess in a bubbly way, holding half of a Christmas cracker.)

Spirit of the Ring: Surprise!

Omar: (Demands) Who are you, and where have you come from?

Spirit of the Ring: I am the Spirit of the Christmas Cracker ring. **(Pretends to read from tiny slip of paper inside half of the cracker.)** ‘I say, I say, I say...what did the cat get, that swallowed a ball of wool?’

Princess: **(Surprised)** I don’t know. What did it get?

Spirit of the Ring: **(Looks round to see if anyone else is going to guess. Pretends to read from tiny slip of paper. Giggles)** ‘A pair of mittens!’

Princess: **(Claps hands together delightedly)** Another!

Spirit of the Ring: **(Pretends to read from the tiny slip of paper)** ‘What do you call a penguin in the desert?’

Princess: **(Thinks. Gives up.)** Um, tell me.

Spirit of the Ring: Tee hee **(giggles and reads answer from slip of paper.)** ‘Lost.’
(Omar guffaws. Indicates to Krithi that a bottle of sanitiser be given to Spirit of the Ring.)

Spirit of the Ring: **(Receives sanitiser. Hands together, bows head. Uses sanitiser)** Thank you. This is most magical.

Princess: **(Laughs and admires ring)** What a lovely novel gift Aladdin. Thank you.

Aba Knees-Up: **(Looks annoyed at Princess’s delight with ring. To Princess)** The ring is an amusing trifle, but in a moment, you will see how my powerful magical lamp outshines it.

Farviz the Oracle: **(Steps forward. To Omar in ingratiating manner)** May it please your excellency, to allow this old, esteemed Oracle to peer into the window of the future of your beloved daughter. Hopefully the view will illuminate an auspicious union, full of many many children, many many camels, and possibly goats.

Omar: Yes, give us a reading, old oracle.

Farviz the Oracle: **(Makes a humming noise. Pretends to go into a trance.)** I see **(dramatically)** I see a happy future prevented by an ugly old oil lamp! **(Points to lamp)** See – see there is blackness surrounding it! Aaaagh, there is death in the lamp! *Death!*
(Craftily) But darkness and misfortune can be averted by giving the lamp into the hands of Farviz the Oracle for safekeeping.

Omar: **(Notices the lamp, horrified)** Surely that is the very lamp dropped by a thief in the palace gardens? Surely that is the very lamp that I, Omar the Opulent, allowed my daughter to keep? **(Dramatically)** Surely Aba Knees-Up, you have brought its black doom-laden tentacles here!

Widow Twankey: **(Goes quickly to where lamp is, grabs lamp and throws it down very heavily upon top of the wash basket, on top of the Scorpion Proof Laundry Net.)** The horrid lamp! Let it be thrown out!

Aba Knees-Up: **(Goes quickly to laundry basket)** Farviz the old Oracle is suffering from delusions and jealousy. My magic lamp is quite harmless. **(Puts hands on top of Scorpion Proof Laundry Net to gain hold of handle of lamp. Picks up lamp. Slight grimace. Looks down briefly at hand.)**

Omar: **(Orders Aba Knees-Up)** You must hand the lamp to Farviz the Oracle for safekeeping, or you will not have my daughter's hand in marriage!

Aba Knees-Up: **(Laughs evilly)** I have the lamp, and I will take what I want! I do not need your permission you old fool! Soon everything you own will be mine! Your kingdom, your jewels, your turban. All mine! **(Laughs evilly. Grabs Princess and pulls her beside him. Rubs lamp with hem of his gown or tunic.)**

(Lights down. Aba Knees-Up gradually sinks to floor with groans. SFX. Extract from musical intro to 'Mastermind'. Genius enters like a 'Mastermind' competitor. Stands. Spotlight falls on Genius of the Lamp. Keep spotlight on. Lights up.)

Genius: Ready for my first question.

(Cast all notice, and gather around Aba Knees-Up on floor.)

Widow Twankey: Oh goodness me! What's Aba Knees-Up doing down there?

Genius: **(Looks at Aba Knees-Up)** Possibly he's rather tired, most likely though, he has expired.

(Farviz comes forward and feels for Aba Knees-Up's pulse.)

Farviz: **(Dramatically)** It is true. Aba Knees-Up is dead!

(Cast all feign horror and gasp. All hold poses for a few seconds. Storyteller closes book. Detective introduces himself/herself. Then, gets all the suspects to line up; say who they are; and what they think about the murder.)

Detective: To assist in your enquiries, we'll send the suspects around for interrogation. But mark my words, among the cast is the murderer. And it is the murderer who will not be truthful in answering your questions! Everyone else must tell the truth.

Now the table who gets to the truth with the most detail will be the winner. Who had the means, the motive, and the opportunity to 'do away' with Aba Knees-Up? Interrogate all your witnesses. Each table will have 2 minutes with each suspect. When the bell rings, they will move on. Remember, it will be the table who gives the best detail of who did it, how they did it, and why they did it, who will be the winners."

(Cast go around the tables to be interrogated. Answer truthfully, and have your character's 'back story' and alibi thought out beforehand. Only the murderer may lie. If a question is really irrelevant, say so. After the interrogations are over, the detective invites the cast to line up, and the culprit to step forward. After much wavering in the line-up, the culprit steps forward, and says why he/she dunnit.)