

PERUSAL SCRIPT



Salt Lake City

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THE IMMORTAL

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CAST of CHARACTERS -- 4M 2F

Emperor Hassan

Empress Sathida

Prince Ramesh -- their late-teen-age son

Arfa -- the Emperor's elder sister

Abduhl Barabeq -- the Emperor's official physician and personal confidant.

Iffendi -- The President of an allied country

ACT ONE

SCENE: An apartment in the official residence of a middle eastern head of state.

TIME: 1981 or the present.

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: Several weeks later.

SCENE 2: Several weeks later.

SCENE 3: Moments later

THE IMMORTAL by Thomas F. Rogers 4M 2F. One Interior. About 90 minutes. (*For performance by Professional, College/University, Amateur and Community groups.*) This play imaginatively derives from real incidents that occurred when the Shah of Iran was deposed in 1941 by the theocratically dominated factions that now govern that country's people. But he did not leave the country until 1953. What the play imaginatively treats are the Shah's actual thoughts and his possible reaction while dying and in exile. Parables from the Middle East and India are extensively employed in the script as commentary on his circumstances and, more broadly, on the world's *realpolitik*, which never seems to change. The issues of this hard-hitting play are just as timely and at home on the stage today as they were in the 1950s. Totalitarian regimes rise and fall and rise again. **Order #3107**

Thomas F. Rogers -- A former director of the BYU Honors Program, Thomas F. Rogers is professor emeritus of Russian language and literature at Brigham Young University and the author of more than a score of plays, many on Mormon subjects. Four of these have been published in *God's Fools* (Signature Books, 1983), which also received the Association of Mormon Letters Drama Prize that same year: **HUEBENER** (the first literary treatment of its subject), **FIRE IN THE BONES** (again, the first literary treatment of its subject, the 1857 Mountain Meadows Massacre), **GOD'S FOOLS** (or **JOURNEY TO GOLGOTHA**) and **REUNION**. Other titles include: **The SECOND PRIEST**, **The ANOINTED** (an Old Testament narrative with music by C. Michael Perry) and **The SEAGULL** (translated and adapted from the Chekov play). In 1992, **GENTLE BARBARIAN**, **FRERE LAWRENCE** and **CHARADES** were published in a second anthology entitled *'Huebener' and Other Plays by Thomas F. Rogers*. Rogers has also penned stage adaptations of Dostoevsky's novels **CRIME AND PUNISHMENT** and **THE IDIOT**, an opera libretto based on Hawthorne's **THE SCARLET LETTER**, a translation of Georg Buechner's **WOYCZEK** (produced at BYU), and scripts based on novels by local authors, Phillip Flammer and Ben Parkinson. The first of these received a BYU production, directed by Tad Danielewski, in which Rogers played the role of Marmeladov.

In 1995–1996 **GOD'S FOOLS** was produced (in translation) by a professional repertory theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia, where Rogers was then serving as an LDS mission president. He also played the role of the American double spy Cooper in that production. During that mission he directed LDS Church members in a stage adaptation of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and a Russian language version of **HUEBENER**. The play has also since been produced in Finland in the Finnish language, while a German translation still awaits forthcoming performances in that language.

At BYU and in Provo, Utah, Rogers directed the premiere productions of Robert Vincek's *For the Lions to Win*, Thom Duncan's *Matters of the Heart* and Eric Samuselsen's *Accommodations* and in Bountiful, Utah, a production of **HUEBENER**. Besides numerous productions in both Russian and German for the BYU Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages, he has directed Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* (in German) for Deutsches Teater Salt Lake City, where he also performed as an actor, and Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, Pirandello's *It Is So If You Think So* and Pinter's *The Caretaker* for the BYU Department of Theatre.

Cited by Eugene England as "undoubtedly the father of modern Mormon drama," Rogers received the Mormon Arts Festival's Distinguished Achievement Award in 1998 and in 2002 a Lifetime Service Award from the Association of Mormon Letters. His published stories have appeared in volume 2, no. 2 of *Sunstone*, the Summer 1991 and Winter 2001 issues of *Dialogue* (receiving an annual *Dialogue* fiction award) and in the collections *Christmas for the World* (SLC: Aspen Books, 1991) and *The Gifts of Christmas* (SLC: Deseret Book Co., 1999). Rogers has served as editor of *Encyclia*, journal of the Utah Academy, and authored two critical monographs: *'Superfluous Men' and the Post-Stalin'thaw'* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972) and *Myth and Symbol in Soviet Fiction* (San Francisco & New York: The Edwin Mellen Research University Press, 1992).

Rogers studied at the Yale School of Drama and holds degrees from the University of Utah, Yale, and Georgetown. He has also studied theatre in Poland and Russian at Moscow State University and taught at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and the University of Utah. He has intensively studied some ten languages and had extensive residences in Russia, Eastern Europe, Germany, Austria, Sweden, the Baltic states, Armenia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, India, China and the Middle East. He and his wife Merriam are the parents of seven children, thirty-eight grandchildren and, so far, three great grandchildren. They reside in Bountiful, Utah.

ACT ONE

SCENE -- *An apartment in the official residence of a middle eastern head of state. TIME: 1981 or the present. Huddled on elegant upholstered chairs are the members of a fugitive royal family -- HASSAN, SATHIDA, RAMESH, and ARFA. Standing near them is BARABEQ. HASSAN frequently stands and paces the room. Those seated lean stiffly forward, betraying extreme tension.*

SATHIDA: *(addressing her husband)* How much longer, Your Highness? He's kept us waiting an hour and a half already.

HASSAN: I told you the President had an emergency meeting with his Minister of Defense. That was his message, wasn't it, Doctor Barabeq.

BARABEQ: It was, Your Eminence.

SATHIDA: The reception at the airport was so brief. The honor guard was extremely small -- only a single row of soldiers.

RAMESH: And only a four gun salute. Not even a band to play our national anthem -- just a scratchy record over the loud speaker that got stuck and started repeating itself after the first two bars.

HASSAN: That at least suggests our emissaries have received many a welcome here.

SATHIDA: But we are no mere emissaries. Our blood line goes directly back to the Prophet. You are the divinely appointed heir of a 3,000-year-old dynasty, in its day the greatest of all the ancient monarchies.

HASSAN: I'm sure the President still respects us, my fair one. As much as ever. He would otherwise have never granted us this refuge in his own official residence. Is that not right, Doctor Barabeq?

BARABEQ: That is quite so, Illustrious One.

HASSAN: In fact, he took a certain risk even bringing us to his country. It wasn't a very popular thing to do. That's why this time he tried to play down our arrival.

SATHIDA: It was an absolute insult!

HASSAN: You saw the student demonstrations as we drove here from the airport.

SATHIDA: I don't care.

ARFA: Sathida, dear. We must be more gracious.

SATHIDA: Bowing so to that Communist riff-raff. They should all be mutilated and put in prison. That's what the old king would have done. And your father back home. He knew how to handle them.

HASSAN: How the President handles his dissidents is not our affair.

SATHIDA: If you'd been as strict as your father you would still be on the throne -- beloved and respected.

HASSAN: Love? Respect? They only profess those qualities when they feel they have no other options.

Remember the farmer in that little mountain village the year we toured Hajjid Province? You remember, don't you, Sister?

ARFA: The man who dressed his son in white, you mean, and crowned his head with flowers?

HASSAN: Yes. Wanted to sacrifice his son to honor me. It took all my body guards to keep him from doing it. And then the mayor. You remember how contrite he seemed, Sathida, when you mentioned their starving children's distended bellies?

SATHIDA: Indeed. He asked me for a list of wealthy patrons from the capital who might send them relief. He was so deferent, so humble. I wrote him a list on the spot. He was terribly grateful.

ARFA: I'd stayed behind, remember? The mayor hadn't noticed me in the entourage. I saw him tear up the list as soon as you turned your back.

SATHIDA: Shocking! Why didn't you tell me later?

ARFA: I knew you would demand his execution.

SATHIDA: I would indeed!

HASSAN: And just last week, on the eve of our departure, before it was certain our backs would be quite so fully turned again, a sub-minister came up to me just before one of our council meetings. First he prostrated himself, then plead under his breath, "Your Majesty, allow me to come up to you and then please say something in my ear -- say whatever you like: 'Drop dead!' or 'Go to Hell!' Just say something so the others will see that the Emperor has spoken to me in private..." If that is love, then, thank you, I'll not have it. Besides, we now live in a modern age. No nation can survive without overcoming its feudal past and educating its youth. And as its youth become literate they will insist on expressing themselves. Isn't that so, Ramesh?

RAMESH: A little education is worse than none. My contemporaries, who can barely read a newspaper, now believe whatever any demagogue prints up for them.

HASSAN: That's why we always kept control of the press.

BARABEQ: And forbade any criticism of the Emperor's royal person.

RAMESH: But that never stopped the underground pamphlets. You were still too permissive, Father, with your public education and your agrarian reforms. You were wise to keep me at home and supply me with the best hand-picked tutors. I have never lost touch with our national reality, with our people's flattering, obsequious hatred for those who try to serve them. But when your father sent you to private schools in Switzerland -- exposing you to a strong middle-class and a centuries-long tradition of parliamentary rule -- it hurt your pride to think that our peasants weren't as responsible. So you began to believe what you so badly wanted to be true. You wanted to be the most beloved of all their monarchs, their great emancipator. You say you wanted to improve our peoples' lives, but you were really only indulging your own ego. You couldn't bear not to have them love you.

SATHIDA: That's right.

RAMESH: It was one way, you thought, to be remembered forever--to become an immortal. But look where it got us. Now we are the least loved of all our country's citizens. For weeks before they hounded us out they were chanting, "Down with the blood sucker!" That's all your reforms and soft words have earned you. That's how our countrymen respond to kindness. Keep them on a tight leash, and they'll purr. Expose your tender belly, and they'll gut you with their hidden fangs.

HASSAN: I see.

RAMESH: Our native teachers always instructed us with parables. Throughout my childhood my nurses recited at least one every night.

HASSAN: And so did mine. Those ancient stories are filled with wisdom. My esteemed sister tells them as skillfully as any nurse.

RAMESH: Then recount for my father, Auntie,"The Parable of the Sheep and the Purse".

HASSAN: “The Sheep and the Purse”?

RAMESH: He’s forgotten it. So tell it to him once more. He needs to ponder it -- now especially.

HASSAN: Do you recall it, My Sister?

ARFA: I recall it.

HASSAN: Then please proceed.

ARFA: Well...one day a man was walking along a road, followed by his sheep. A thief went after him, cut the rope of the sheep, and took it away. When he realized what had happened, the man ran all over the place looking for his animal. At last he came to a well, where he saw a man who looked in great despair. He did not recognize this man as the thief who had already taken his sheep. He asked the man what grieved him so. The thief said: “I dropped a purse into this well. It contains five hundred silver coins. If you will jump in and retrieve it, I will give you a fifth of them.” The man thought: “When one door shuts, a hundred may open. So many coins would be worth ten sheep like the one I lost.” With that he stripped himself and plunged into the well.

HASSAN: Ah, yes, the ending comes back to me.

RAMESH: Which is...?

HASSAN: That the thief thereupon carried off the man’s clothes is a deft analogy. But what makes you think, my son, that I don’t well enough understand how capricious my subjects are?

ARFA: You forget, My Nephew, that your father has survived more than one attempt on his life and was also exiled once before. Before you were even born he and his wife, the previous Empress, simply took a holiday in Europe. They didn’t stay more than a few weeks before word came.

HASSAN: That’s right. We were sitting in a restaurant in Rome on the Via Veneto when someone brought us a paper. The opposition had been completely overthrown by a popular uprising. So, you see, the people’s capriciousness sometimes works in our favor.

RAMESH: That particular uprising was staged by the American CIA.

HASSAN: Our allies may have assisted it, but the people were genuinely clamoring for their Emperor. The Empress and I didn’t even finish our meal. Our suitcases were already packed. We took the very next plane and flew directly to the capital. They cheered our motorcade all the way to the palace.

RAMESH: How many million rials did the Americans distribute in the bazaar to recruit them?

HASSAN: I don’t recall. It was in the Americans’ interest to keep me in power. I was a known quantity, and, while I was on the throne, they knew, our oil would continue to flow at a fair price. As far as our people were concerned, it was essentially the same. As they demonstrated, they convinced themselves that I was still their chosen leader. You see, I too know a thing or two about public opinion.

RAMESH: But there are no longer any Americans to bring you back -- except those sitting ducks under house arrest at the American embassy. A lot of good they’ll do you. And the people will never forgive you for what your Security Police did after you returned -- all the atrocities.

HASSAN: You accuse me of not being strong. But I was strong after that first exile. I’d been too liberal, it’s true. I’d extended privileges the people couldn’t handle. But I could see through that. I wasn’t gullible any more. Those whose loyalty was at all suspect were thoroughly investigated, even tortured if necessary.

RAMESH: That was alright. If you’d only been consistent. But as you tightened the one rein you slackened on the other. Those you should have trusted least, those who resented you the most because you took away their

land and threatened their control over the people, were the mullahs. They're the ones who did you in.

SATHIDA: Exactly!

RAMESH: Ha! It fits.

SATHIDA: What fits, My Dove?

RAMESH: Another parable. Your nurses have trained me well, My Dear Parents. But what they taught me has bearing for more than myself.

SATHIDA: What other parable, My Comely Prince?

RAMESH: "The Parable of Flour and Salt".

SATHIDA: Of course! It fits well.

HASSAN: I don't recall that one.

SATHIDA: As Ramesh says, your Western education put you out of touch with our peoples' ways, even their folklore. But I remember this one very well. I heard it many a time at my own nurse's knee. Let me tell it.

HASSAN: Please do, My Fair Enchantress. And I'll review other parables in the days ahead. I'll have the time for it.

SATHIDA: Now listen carefully, My Husband. You need to learn from this one too: There was once a fool.

HASSAN: And I am doubtless that fool --

SATHIDA: Who was sent to buy flour and salt. He took a dish to carry his purchases. "Make sure," said the man who sent him, "not to mix them. I want them separate." So when the shopkeeper had filled the dish with flour and was measuring out the salt, the fool said: "Do not mix it with the flour. Here, I will show you where to put it." And with that he inverted the dish to provide from its upturned bottom a surface upon which the salt could be laid.

HASSAN: The flour, of course, fell to the floor.

RAMESH: But at least the salt -- the fool's precious salt, My Father -- was safe.

SATHIDA: Anyway, when the fool got back to the man who had sent him, he said; "Here is the salt." "Very well," said the other man, but where is the flour?"

RAMESH: Exactly!

SATHIDA: "It should be here," said the fool, turning the dish over,

RAMESH: But as soon as he did that, the salt fell to the ground, and the flour was of course also seen to have disappeared. Do you remember that one now, My Father?

HASSAN: Somewhat.

RAMESH: And how does it strike you?

HASSAN: The point is obviously that, in doing some things, we may undo other things that are equally important.

RAMESH: Yes.

HASSAN: I should think it would pertain to ideas as well as actions, My Son.

RAMESH: Meaning... ?

HASSAN: Meaning that when this happens with a man's thoughts, he is equally lost, no matter how much, upon reflection, he considers his thinking to be logical.

BARABEQ: Bravo, Your Highness...!

RAMESH: *(with an annoyed look at BARABEQ)* I quite agree.

SATHIDA: Indeed. But it was raised just now for *your* benefit, my Illustrious Husband.

HASSAN: I thank you both. I appreciate your thoughtfulness—your good intentions. But, speaking practically, I still have my generals, Give them time. They’ll take care of the mullahs.

SATHIDA: Let us hope so. We must at least stop rehearsing the past and face the grim present. We are castaways -- perhaps forever. The mullahs have incited our students in every foreign country. Each of them is a potential assassin.

HASSAN: I remember the first time.

SATHIDA: Please don’t recall it.

HASSAN: It was during the founding of the national university. I was just entering the Faculty of Law buildings, where we were to hold the ceremony and then a reception. It was winter, and a red carpet had been spread across the snow from my limousine and up the outer steps. They were all there, weren’t they, Arfa, all my aides -- except for you, Doctor, and our highest ranking generals. Then five shots tore through the cold air, coming, we found out later, from the cluster of photographers. With the first shot, I started to shadow-dance -- just like I used to when I boxed. That’s what saved me. As it was, three bullets passed through my military cap and another -- see this scar, My Son -- passed through my right cheekbone and came out under my nose. The blood streamed down my face. Meanwhile, at the sound of the shots, panic broke out everywhere. Police guards, ministers, university officials, the generals -- each vied with the other to get out of the line of fire.

RAMESH: No one cared to shield his Emperor, isn’t that right?

HASSAN: That’s right. Though I’m convinced it would have been different in your case, Abduhl. As it was in fact on a later occasion,

BARABEQ: I like to think so, Your Highness.

HASSAN: I knew there must be one more shot in the assassin’s magazine. But it had apparently jammed.

RAMESH: Well, who had put him up to it?

HASSAN: We never found out. As he tried to escape, some of my young officers unfortunately killed him.

RAMESH: Unfortunately -- or conveniently?

HASSAN: Perhaps ‘conveniently’. Oh, he was identified alright, and his apartment searched. He’d been a student and a religious fanatic. But what was interesting, there were also a number of Communist pamphlets on his book shelf.

RAMESH: Probably planted.

HASSAN: Yes, that may be. For a while at least, he incident did perk up my ministers. “Keep going, gentlemen,” I said to them. “You can expect me to be shot at every week to keep you on your toes.”

(ARFA and BARABEQ politely laugh.)

Then there were the other times -- the one in the palace just outside my office door where a soldier went berserk and gunned down two body guards but was felled just in time by the last one. That’s the time you were wounded too, Doctor. But I won’t go into any of that now.

SATHIDA: Please. It’s clear enough that we are only safe in a few countries like this one -- and only with special protection. We’re as confined as those no-account clerks in the American embassy and in just as much danger. How long will the President let us stay here? That’s what should concern us now. The fact that he still hasn’t come to see us is not at all encouraging.

BARABEQ: I am sure we will know before much longer, Your Highness. The President is not only kindly disposed to his friends but also very business-like. He will make us an offer as soon as he can and then live up to it. In fact, that is probably what has detained him. He said he would need to consult with his ministers before coming to see us -- probably to make arrangements for your stay here -- and for your security. *(looking out a nearby window)* As a matter of fact, a limousine is just now coming up the drive. He should join us in only a few more minutes.

ARFA: Then we'll know what he has decided as soon as he enters the room.

RAMESH: How, Auntie?

ARFA: By the way he greets us. If he acts too pleased, we will know we cannot stay. If he is troubled, we will know he has shouldered our burden.

BARABEQ: That is so.

HASSAN: Yes, but let us meanwhile console ourselves with another parable since the Crown Prince seems to enjoy them so. I will select this one. Sister Dear, please recount the one our Regal Mother used to tell about illusion. That will calm us, whatever our fate, and give us the perspective we need in our present situation.

ARFA: "The Parable about Illusion" Is not one of our own. It's from farther East, as I remember.

HASSAN: I believe so. But it profoundly speaks to each of us. Please proceed.

ARFA: Well, a young man had learned that we all live with certain illusions, and, being young, he naturally wished to be free of his. He therefore sought out a famous sage, a visionary with piercing black eyes and equally penetrating insight, whom he asked to tell him about illusion. But the sage was reluctant. The young man was so insistent, however, that at last the sage handed him his brass water pot. Re then pointed across the desert, saying that, if the young man would first travel to a certain oasis, fill the pot and bring it back to him, the sage would help him understand his illusions. The young man did so. Arriving after many days of long march, exhausted and nearly dead, he encountered a beautiful young girl his approximate age. Her eyes, which somehow reminded him of the sage's, particularly captivated him. The girl brought him to her parents' cool hut, where they nursed and fed him. For refreshment they offered him fresh, cool water from a nearby spring. He had asked them to fill the sage's brass bowl, but they brought him water in their own clay vessels. He didn't object though: the water was so refreshing. And he had meanwhile fallen in love with the old couple's daughter. So he stayed on. In the course of time, they gave him her hand and before long she bore him a son and then a daughter and still more beautiful children. Eventually, the old couple died, having deeded the young man and their daughter a sizable piece of property. The man's life was full and prosperous. Everything a man could ever want had come to him, and he was exceedingly content. Then, in about the twelfth year of his marriage, there was a terrible, unexpected flood: all his dear ones -- his wife and precious children -- and everything he owned were swept away. Now you ask what he did next, and I will tell you: He awoke, finding that he had laid his head in the sage's lap and that both were now sitting in the shade of a tree. The brass bowl sat just in front of them, filled to its brim with fresh, clear water. The sage then asked him: "Now do you know what it means to live with illusion?" But the young man, still under the spell of his terrible loss, could only shake his head and reply, the hot tears streaming down his cheeks: "Don't tell me that what I once knew and so loved -- my wife, my children, my fields, my flocks -- were only an illusion. Then, staring at the young man with his dark, penetrating eyes, the sage said the following: "You still apparently do not understand what illusion is -- or do not want to. But I tell me, do you

really want to go back and live it all again -- your marriage, your loved ones, all that you cherished so -- and then lose them? And keep doing so for how many more times until you finally learn what illusion is and why we are only free when we no longer desire or seek it...?”

RAMESH: Is that all?

ARFA: That is all. But it is much.

HASSAN: Yes, much. A great much...

BARABEQ: Forgive my invoking the illusion of mundane facts, Your Highness, but after you speak with the President I must subject you to another physical examination. You have not rested well since your departure.

ARFA: That is right, My Brother. You've been haggard and listless for the last several months. I worry about you.

SATHIDA: How could he be otherwise -- given the strain and tension of his office? Especially this last year?

HASSAN: To tell you the truth, I have not rested well since my coronation ten years ago during our nation's jubilee. Oh, for the days, Fairest One -- not so many years ago either, before Ramesh was born and while he was still an infant -- when we flew every other week to Paris, New York, or London. Such wonderful night clubs. The boutiques and salons—how you loved their exclusive, pace-setting fashions.

SATHIDA: That's all over, I'm afraid.

HASSAN: The leisurely summers at remote German spas or in Monaco or Capri, exchanging visits with the world's crowned heads. Never a superfluous care. You remember too, don't you, Arfa?

ARFA: Frankly, I found it rather monotonous.

HASSAN: You always were so serious. I remember how annoyed you were whenever from the next room I alarmed our guests by impersonating wild beasts.

ARFA: Or the times you would return from Europe with toy frogs and spiders, scandalizing your guests.

HASSAN: (*gleefully*) Especially the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. Remember how one night they kept finding them in their bed? The frogs even croaked!

BARABEQ: Your most distressing prank was the way you bated your courtiers to jump into the royal swimming pool fully clothed. I did it once myself.

HASSAN: I never forced anyone. I only hinted. But there were always enough so anxious to please me that they gladly acted the fool.

BARABEQ: I... only once.

HASSAN: Admit it. You did it for the attention. And you loved it!

BARABEQ: (*sheepishly*) I was drunk.

RAMESH: Do I hear right, Mother? Is this the all-wise heir of our divine millennial throne?

SATHIDA: That was before our time, my dear. I put a stop to all that childishness. Your father grew up under my graces -- socially anyway.

HASSAN: (*good naturedly*) At least you let me keep my electric train. The finest Lionel ever made. I even managed to bring it with me on the plane. Perhaps it will distract you too, My Son.

RAMESH: I'm beyond toys, Father.

HASSAN: It's a wonderful way to pass the time. And we'll have plenty in the days ahead.

(*A knock*)

BARABEQ: That should be the President. Watch his expression,

HASSAN: Admit him.

(BARABEQ opens the door, admitting President IFFENDI, a thin, dapper man in a black frock coat and gray pin-striped trousers.)

IFFENDI: *(beaming)* My dearest, truest friends! How you gladden us with your presence!!

SATHIDA: *(under her breath)* We are lost!

IFFENDI: *(making the rounds, kissing the ladies' hands, etc.)* Your Majesty. The Empress is truly ravishing...

The royal princess looks as young as ever...But the crown prince -- is this really he? Why, if I'm not mistaken he's reached his majority. What a strong right-hand man he already must be to his father.

HASSAN: We are honored by our cousin's kind hospitality.

IFFENDI: The servants have, I trust, attended to your every need. Were you served refreshments?

SATHIDA: We weren't hungry.

IFFENDI: I understand. The journey was fatiguing. First you must rest, Then we will banquet. Tonight I will spread you a sumptuous feast -- with no visitors. Very quiet. Very peaceful.

HASSAN: Your Eminence is most thoughtful.

SATHIDA: It would also be better for you not to put us on public display, isn't that so?

IFFENDI: Discretion would, I agree, be the better policy at this particular moment. We are nonetheless overjoyed to have you with us.

SATHIDA: For how long?

IFFENDI: The Empress is quite to the point.

HASSAN: Fair One, you are too abrupt. Is that why we have so few women diplomats?

IFFENDI: On the contrary, Your Highness, I find such 'abruptness' quite refreshing.

SATHIDA: The Doctor said that His Eminence is both kind and does not mince words. So why should we?

IFFENDI: As far as I am personally concerned, you may consider this place an eternal haven. You are our country's honored guests for as long as you care to grace us with your presence. So far, that is, as I am personally concerned. But you must remember that I am only an elected official. I cannot claim the divine right of tenure like such esteemed monarchs as yourselves. And, as a responsible politician, I must ever weigh the disposition of my party and those who would re-elect me -- a disposition that is, I'm sorry to say, often quite fickle.

BARABEQ: But Your Eminence is, more than anyone else, in a position to mold your peoples' views and very skilled in doing so.

IFFENDI: Thank you, Your Worthiness, But only to a point.

(eyeing the others, who seem particularly crestfallen)

But please don't despair. The situation is far from hopeless, and we will bend every effort. Meanwhile, have you any other options?

HASSAN: Frankly, no.

IFFENDI: That is depressing. You see, I can easily handle our revolutionary rabble. They're quite helpless, and we don't have your mullahs to incite them. But one of our problems -- let me be frank, it's a personal matter -- is that not only have those upstarts who presently dominate your political scene arrested the personnel at your American embassy, holding them as, who knows how precarious, a hostage, but -- and we got this just this afternoon in a cable -- they have, upon learning your present whereabouts, also arrested one of our own

foreign service personnel.

HASSAN: How dare they!!

IFFENDI: Yes, our cultural attaché -- a young man recently arrived at his post, new to his assignment but most promising.

IFFENDI: What is especially regrettable, I suppose -- at least where I'm concerned -- is that this same young attaché happens to be my younger brother.

SATHIDA: *(to herself)* Then we are done for!

HASSAN: Why this is awful.

BARABEQ: Outright blackmail.

HASSAN: Unheard of!

IFFENDI: . I try to be objective about such matters. But surely you understand the nature of my attachment.

HASSAN: By all means, Your Eminence.

IFFENDI: So, you see, much will depend on the fate of my brother.

HASSAN: Of course. We fully understand.

IFFENDI: I'm grateful for that, particularly in view of your own trying circumstances.

SATHIDA: Forgive me, Your Eminence, if I change the subject, but it would cheer me if for the next half hour you were to escort me through those lovely formal gardens beyond the window.

IFFENDI: I'd be only too pleased. This, as you may know, is a royal residence. That's also why it's so appropriate to have you here just now. Those were the favorite gardens of our last queen, Jemalia, before she and her consort were finally, uh... deposed.

SATHIDA: Well then, let's you and I view them.

IFFENDI: By all means. With His Highness's leave...

HASSAN: Thank you for offering the Empress such a pleasant distraction.

(IFFENDI and SATHIDA leave.)

BARABEQ: *May I suggest, Your Highness,* that this would be a good time for the examination?

HASSAN: Certainly. My Dear Sister, My Son. Will you please excuse us? And try in the meanwhile to get some rest.

ARFA: Yes, My Brother. I hope you are feeling better.

HASSAN: Ramesh?

RAMESH: Yes, Father?

HASSAN: I just thought of another parable -- another of my mother's. It was her favorite and most profound. I haven't heeded it too well myself, but it's most instructive. It's called "The Parable of the Wishing Tree."... I'd like to share it with you sometime.

RAMESH: As you wish, Sire. Some other time.

HASSAN: Till supper then.

RAMESH: Till supper.

(ARFA and RAMESH exit.)

BARABEQ: *(indicating a hard back chair)* Please sit here, Your Highness.

HASSAN: *(doing so)* And remove my shirt, is that it?

BARABEQ: Please.

(He opens a medical bag.)

HASSAN: *(removing his shirt)* It's been so handy having my personal physician as the minister of my imperial court. You've been very faithful over the years, Abduhl. Like no one else.

BARABEQ: Maybe I'm just old fashioned...

(applying a stethoscope to Hassan's back and chest)

Hold your breath, please.

HASSAN: You're also not personally ambitious -- like so many others.

BARABEQ: One more breath, please. If I were, I would not have pleased you, and you'd have dismissed me or had my head removed years ago. So, you see, I benefited more this way than otherwise.

HASSAN: How could the state function without at least a handful of faithful servants?

BARABEQ: *(taking Hassan's pulse)* That's true, Your Highness. I love our country, and I have learned to love her in the person of her divinely appointed figurehead. I see no advantage to rebellion and social upheaval. Only greater suffering for many and a less productive economy.

HASSAN: *(as BARABEQ produces a hypodermic)* If only more had your wisdom. You want more blood, do you?

BARABEQ: I'm afraid I need another sample. It's still just a routine precaution, you understand. But we need to watch your white cell count. I'll send it tonight to a laboratory in Germany. They should have a reading within a week, and, as always, I'll make sure that they send it in code.

HASSAN: By all means. That's all our enemies need--to think I'm on my last legs. It wouldn't even do to let Iffendi know if anything is seriously wrong -- nor for that matter my wife and son.

BARABEQ: I understand.

HASSAN: I wonder what it's like -- to be a common family man. Not keeping secrets from your family and friends. What bliss. If there is ever a reincarnation, don't make me a potentate.

BARABEQ: I sympathize.

HASSAN: Tell me, Abduhl, haven't I meant well by my people? Haven't more peasants their own plot of ground? Aren't there more public works than ever before in history? More scholarships for gifted youth? More opportunities for advancement? Haven't I deeded away most of my ancestral estates and created a foundation for the poor as an example to the other landlords? As for civil liberties, haven't I gone as far as I dared -- even, as Ramesh suggests, too far?

BARABEQ: I cannot fault you, My Lord. You have done as much as could ever be expected -- far more than was required.

HASSAN: Then have I really been so out of touch -- like that last Russian czar?

BARABEQ: You have not, Sire.

HASSAN: Why is it then that, the harder I try and the more I do for them, the less satisfied they are and all the more hateful? Why do they hate me so?

BARABEQ: As we've said before, it's incited by the powerful mullahs and the wealthy monopolists. Your example is a threat to them, They are not so generous and far-sighted as you. And then, like the jackals they are, the Communists exploit the situation and make the whole thing seem a popular movement,

HASSAN: Then I haven't really disappointed the people?

BARABEQ: They may think you have. At least for the time being. Because that's what they're being told, But,

no, you've been good to them. Better than anyone before you. And some day history will give you the credit you deserve.

HASSAN: Do you really think so...? What of the Western press? They talk of my 'atrocities' as if they half believed the mullahs' propaganda.

BARABEQ: Ramesh is right: The West has its own history, its own traditions. It has another standard from our own. No one can change ours either, or try to make it over, When your father's jockeys failed to win a race he thought they should have, he'd personally beat and pummel them till they were unconscious. You never did that.

HASSAN: I've tried to be my own sportsman; polo, skiing, soccer during my school days -- later sports cars and flying.

BARABEQ: But you've also respected Muslim law, which is the code of your people: if a man is caught stealing more than twice, off with his hand. It's a great practical deterrent. Your Security Police had to take the same measures.

HASSAN: Sometimes they were too ruthless. The innocent have suffered, I know that. But not by my order. And didn't I always censure -- even demote -- those who went too far?

BARABEQ: That you did. Please, My Lord, don't concern yourself with others' accusations. The West and its sensation-loving press will never understand how things really are -- not now anyway. Nor can we expect them to....

HASSAN: It's true, isn't it?

BARABEQ: True?

HASSAN: I really do crave my people's love. I'm not happy without it. But there's something more. I also want to earn their love. That makes it less than totally selfish, doesn't it?

BARABEQ: It does, Your Highness....

(SATHIDA enters.)

Well, and how were the royal gardens?

SATHIDA: It was the most rewarding stroll I've ever taken.

HASSAN: That beautiful?

SATHIDA: At least the consequences.

HASSAN: And what were they?

SATHIDA: We're permanent guests, We can reside here as long as we care to.

HASSAN: Really...? You're quite the diplomat, after all, My Fair One. But what will it cost us?

SATHIDA: Since this time I've managed to save all our necks --

HASSAN: We'll be ever grateful --

SATHIDA: You needn't ask. But, believe me, the price was not too high.

HASSAN: No?

SATHIDA: In fact, it was well worth what we have had to pay.

HASSAN: I...see....

END OF ACT ONE

13 more pages make up Act Two