Act 1, Scene 3-Excitement in the grand bazaar!

(The bazaar is abuzz with activity. Merchants are busy selling as people shop the stalls. Kids are wandering in small groups.)

AZIZ: Dates, fresh, sweet dates, picked this very morning. Come sample their fragrance.

MUNA: I cannot taste fragrance. A bite of your best dates is all I need.

AZIZ: Only for you madam, my most special customer.

RANA: I have the finest silks from China. They are the blue of the sky, scarlet of the sunset, and green of the peacock.

KHALIQ: That is just the thing for my wife’s birthday.

RANA: It will be a special gift, fit for a queen.

QADIR: Handmade carpets, the best in all of Persia. Soft to the touch yet will last for years. Made from the softest wool of my very own sheep.

AMMAN: How much for these treasures?

QADIR: My friend, do not focus too much on the price. Think of the beauty of these works of art.

KAAMILAH: Baubles, bangles, and beads!

WAJEERA: So many beautiful things. I just can’t decide which one to buy.

KAAMILAH: I will make it easy for you. Buy one of each.

WAJEERA: Only if you offer your very best price.

KAAMILAH: For you, my first customer of the day discount.

NADIR: How much for apples today?

BASIMAH: 10 dinars my friend.

NADIR: Achmed is selling them for half that.

BASIMAH: Perhaps, but I’m sure you will only get half the flavor of my crisp apples.

(Some of the street children start to do a an acrobatic performance to distract the merchants. A watermelon is rolled away. Aladdin suddenly runs on, out of breath, and goes to Basimah’s apple stand.)

ALADDIN: (excited and worried) Basimah! Basimah!

BASIMAH: Aladdin, what has happened? Is there an emergency?

ALADDIN: Sly and stealthy thieves have just struck the market near our home, pilfering fruits and vegetables!

BASIMAH: It can’t happen here under my watchful eye.

ALADDIN: Oh, but it can. The scoundrels create a distraction, and before you know it, your sweet apples have disappeared. (One of Aladdin’s friends tosses apples to a friend, who tosses it to another, taking them all).

BASIMAH: (Has an apple in his hand). My apples are safe and sound but thank you for the warning. Here is an apple for your trouble. (Aladdin walks off stage R. Basimah looks back at his apples and sees apples are missing). Aladdin was right. Help, I’ve been robbed! My apples have been stolen. (Other merchants are distracted and the kids steal from their stalls as they exit slowly. They will reenter from down door stage right next to Aladdin’s father’s shop. Lights down on main stage, market people exit).

RASHID: Silly, old Basimah and his watchful eye.

AMANI: Many thanks to him and his fellow merchants for our delicious breakfast.

SHAKOOR: Have you heard the news? The princess will travel through the city today to visit the baths.

ALADDIN: Princess Boudrabadour? I hear she is beautiful beyond all belief.

GHADAH: What difference will that make to a lazy, poor thief like yourself?

ALADDIN: Don’t be fooled by appearances. Someday I will be a respected, wealthy prince and live in a grand palace.

HAKEEM: And I will fly all over Persia on a flying carpet!

YASMEEN: Oh, and I’m positive the princess is heading to your shop right now so you can outfit her in a beautiful chador.

ALADDIN: Stranger things have been known to happen.

ZAHRAB: Not to sons of poor tailors. Dream on Aladdin!

ALADDIN: Today I start as a tailor’s apprentice. This will be my beginning on the road to riches.

IBRAHIM: You a tailor’s apprentice? When camels fly and monkey’s talk!

ALADDIN: You will regret those words someday. I will be a tailor today but my destiny is much greater.

RASHID: Your destiny is to be scolded by your father.

AMANI: And to be hungry again within the hour.

FATHER: (Steps out of shop, kids run off in all directions.) Aladdin, you are late. Where have you been? I’m sure you have been loafing in the grand bazaar with your shiftless friends while I work like a slave from sun up to sundown. I must deliver these finished clothes. I am counting on you to mind the shop until I return. It’s time to get to work and learn a trade. Do not wander off.

ALADDIN: Yes, father. (Father exits down door, adults, Aladdin goes in shop, sorcerer, and kids fill the market, and a fanfare announces the arrival of the Princess and her entourage from stage left.)

GUARD #1: Make way for the Princess Boudrabadour! Turn your backs and avert your eyes, so as not to gaze upon her perfection and risk death! (People gradually leave market, while princess, maid, and entourage remain.)

PRINCESS: I don’t understand why we have to parade through the city with guards, no people to see, and all this rigamarole.

MAID: It wouldn’t be proper for a princess of your status.

PRINCESS: What do I care about status? I want to explore the city, rub elbows with my people, eat in the bazaar, and so much more. I want excitement and adventure!

MAID: That only happens in those stories that you read in your books. That isn’t what real life is like. For you, there is study and training for the day when you will rule over our land and its people.

PRINCESS: That doesn’t sound like any fun at all.

MAID: That is a wise observation, princess. It isn’t supposed to be fun.

PRINCESS: Taroob! Look behind that stall. Assassins lying in wait! Guards!

GUARD #2: Assassins, where?

PRINCESS: They went that way! Hurry and capture them or the Sultan will have your heads for not protecting the princess! (Guards and maid exit stage left, while princess sneaks off stage right, coming out down door and runs to tailor shop, out of breath. Aladdin sees her and comes out.)

ALADDIN: Can I help you?

PRINCESS: Yes, please do. I need to be hidden from the Sultan’s guards because of a little trouble in the grand bazaar. Can you help me?

ALADDIN: I know all about those guards. You have come to right place. Right this way. (Guards and maid enter stage left, confused and searching stalls and shops for princess. A guard comes to the tailor shop and knocks.)

ALADDIN: How may I help you captain? A new shirt perhaps?

GUARD #3: We are looking for a girl, about \_\_\_ tall, with black hair and brown eyes. Has she passed this way?

ALADDIN: No one has come down our humble alley all day. If I see anyone who fits that description, I will notify you immediately. You can count on me.

GUARD #4: Thank you and good day. (He leaves and joins maid and other guards on stage. They all exit stage L.)

ALADDIN: The coast is clear. It is safe to come out.

PRINCESS: Thank you. Why did you help me, a total stranger?

ALADDIN: I knew you were in trouble. I have seen trouble from time to time so I treated you as I would wish to be treated.

PRINCESS: Are you a tailor?

ALADDIN: I am only a tailor’s apprentice and not a very good one at that, but I am known throughout the grand bazaar for my skills, intelligence, and charm.

PRINCESS: Not to mention your humility.

ALADDIN: I am destined for great things. I may appear to be a poor apprentice, but someday I will be a prince among men.

PRINCESS: That is a very ambitious dream. You must be a very hard worker.

ALADDIN: Not at all, my charm and good fortune will serve me well. What brings you to my shop besides escaping from the Sultan’s guards?

PRINCESS: I was looking for adventure and freedom.

ALADDIN: I understand completely. Most of my day is spent doing that very thing.

PRINCESS: You are so lucky. I wish that was my life.

ALADDIN: Perhaps someday. For now, the coast is clear. It is a good time to continue your adventures. Take this to remember me. (Gives her a scarf.)

PRINCESS: So long and thank you very much. (Goes out down door right. The guards continue to search the bazaar and the maid knocks at Aladdin’s door.)

MAID: Excuse me, have you seen a girl wandering by about \_\_\_ tall, with dark hair and brown eyes. She is the daughter of the Sultan and was entrusted to my care. The princess could be in grave danger.

ALADDIN: (Honestly shocked) A princess in my humble shop? I’m flattered that you think that would even be a possibility. I have not seen a princess.

MAID: Thank you and good day. (Joins guards on stage, Princess enters stage R, father comes out down door right to go to shop.) There you are princess! Where have you been?

PRINCESS: I went looking for adventure and freedom.

MAID: You have a life that others can only dream of. The Sultan gives you everything; the finest dresses, jewelry of the purest gold, the rarest gems, and provides servants to see to your every need. What more could you want?

PRINCESS: I desire to explore the world and make my own decisions.

MAID: Don’t talk of such foolishness. You had worried. These back alleys can be very dangerous. You never know who you might meet.

PRINCESS: That is true. (She walks off stage L, the maid brings up the rear.)

MAID: Explore the world indeed! I swear by the Hand of Fatima I will lock that girl in a tower until the day of her marriage to the son of the Grand Vizier. I hope he knows what he is getting into. Sometimes I wish the princess would have been a boy. Boys are much easier to manage than girls. (exits,Lights down on bazaar.)

FATHER: Lots of excitement in the bazaar just now. The Princess Boudrabadour went missing and guards were searching everywhere. Did you notice?

ALADDIN: I was too busy cleaning the shop to notice anything.

FATHER: Cleaning what? Everything is as it was when I left. How will you hope to be a tailor and make a living in this world?

ALADDIN: I…..never wanted to be a tailor. It might be your dream but it isn’t mine.

FATHER: What would you become?

ALADDIN: I have my dreams.

FATHER: Dreams don’t buy food or put a roof over your head!

ALADDIN: Father, was it your dream to become a tailor?

FATHER: Of course not. It was what my father was, so it was what I would become and it is what you will become. This is your fate and the sooner you realize that, the better off you will be. Here is a coin for bread for dinner. I will meet you at home. Be sure to go straight home to help your mother. (Aladdin goes to bazaar, joins friends, and doesn’t go home. Father closes shop, goes out down door. Lights down on bazaar, father walks from stage R. home tired, and discouraged.)

MOTHER: Welcome home. You do not look well, my husband. Please sit and rest.

FATHER: It has been a very long day. Where is Aladdin?

MOTHER: I have not seen him since this morning. I thought he was with you in the shop.

FATHER: I sent him home to buy bread for dinner. I am sure he is roaming the grand bazaar with his friends. I work like a slave and can barely support our family. Aladdin has no ambition and shows no interest in learning anything useful. He sits around and dreams of his destiny. It wears me out, day after day. His idleness will be the death of me. (Becomes ill and slumps in chair and falls to floor. Aladdin enters.)

ALADDIN: Father!  
MOTHER: Where have you been? Your father is gravely ill. Run to get the doctor. Hurry! (lights down on house, up on Narrator on center stage.)

NARRATOR: Aladdin and the doctor did not arrive in time to save the life of Mustapha. Grief came over the house as did hard times. Since Aladdin had not learned the art of being a tailor, they were poorer than ever. Mother had to sell the cloth and tools of Mustapha’s trade to buy food. When the money ran out, she took to spinning cotton for Aladdin to sell in the now empty tailor shop. Five years had passed since the passing of Mustapha and life had only gotten worse for the poor family.