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Arabian Knights — The Panto!

Richard Lloyd

Samuel French — London
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ARABIAN KNIGHTS – THE PANTO!

First performed as *Lionheart!* on Saturday 15th December 1990, by Theatre Workshop, Coulsdon, with the following cast:

Dame Dollop	Tim Young
Brat	Matt Watkinson
Thomasina	Lisa Boniface
Saladin	Christopher Argles
Onion Bhaji	Martin Cole
Al Kazeltzah	Bruce Montgomery
Oshgosh	Robert Del Toro
Babu	Richard Lloyd
Hasan The Bandit	Rebecca Ford
The Evil Yasmin	Tatiana Allison
Ibn Dun	Mike Brown
Ali-Kat	Paul M. Ford
Mustapha Spit	Penny Simeone
	Lesley Argles
Dancing Girls	Kimberley Argles
	Bryony Eida
	Rachel Handler
	Maria New
	Wendy New
	Karen-Jane Worger
Palace Servants	Ian Shaw
	John Shaw

Directed by Richard Lloyd
Musical director Mark Taylor
Choreographer Tina Cousins
Technical Director Mark Hobbs

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PREFACE

OK, I admit it. I'm a sucker for those B-movie clichés of the mysterious orient – dashing bandits and svelte houris, idyllic oases and teeming souks, hawk-faced magicians, desert-defying caravans, corrupt Grand Viziers, gorgeous palaces, and Ray Harryhausen special effects. The whole scene is pure Turkish Delight, and I wanted to create a pantomime rich in this technicolor Arabian Nights imagery, without re-hashing the usual suspects: Aladdin, Ali-Baba, and Sinbad. (One day, I must read the Thousand and One tales of Scheherazade, to find out exactly what the other 998 are about... and discover how we ended up endlessly recycling just three of them!)

Anyway, that's how *Arabian Knights – The Panto!* came about. An Eastern concoction into which every conceivable Arabian Nights cliché has been stirred, seasoned with a tiny twist of alternative history, and all cunningly bound together in a traditional pantomime recipe featuring lots of familiar ingredients – not forgetting several opportunities to add a dash of local flavour to your production.

The main protagonists, Richard and Saladin, are not traditional pantomime characters, although interestingly, both can be found as stock characters in the mumming plays of earlier ages — ritual folk plays which are thought to have informed much of what we regard today as traditional pantomime.

Richard and Saladin do possess a legendary quality though -- a dark patina of myth well built up over the historical figures. The resultant two-dimensional caricatures which have come down to us bear scant relation to the real Richard and the real Saladin. Saladin was in fact greatly respected and admired by the Crusaders as a compassionate and sophisticated adversary, and a brilliant commander. Richard, on the other hand, was very far from the romantic, kingly figure which popular history has bequeathed us.

Still. This is pantomime, and caricature is our stock-in-trade. So here goes...

Richard Lloyd

CHARACTERS

Haroun the Storyteller
Dame Dollop, a pantomime dame
Brat, a brat
Tommy, properly Thomasina, principal girl and niece to Dame Dollop
Saladin, a pantomime villain
Onion Bhaji, Grand Vizier to Saladin
Al Kazeltzah, a genie
Oshgosh and Babu, of the Palace Guard of Saladin
Hasan The Bandit, principal boy — a clean limbed son of the desert (in reality, Richard Lionheart)
The Evil Yasmin, first in the harem of Saladin
Ibn Dun, a eunuch
Ali-Kat, a decommissioned assassin
Mustapha Spit, a pantomime camel
Dancing Girls
Palace Guards, leopard handlers, food tasters, lissom concubines, etc.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

PROLOGUE
SCENE 1 Merrie England – a dung hovel in a turnip patch
SCENE 2 The Kasbah of Saladin
SCENE 3 Merrie England – a dung hovel in a turnip patch
SCENE 4 The Holy Land. A quayside hard by the souk
SCENE 5 The Kasbah of Saladin
SCENE 6 The Souk

ACT II

SCENE 1 The Harem of Saladin
SCENE 2 The Souk
SCENE 3 The Kasbah of Saladin
SCENE 4 Before the gates of the Kasbah
SCENE 5 A secret passageway beneath the Kasbah
SCENE 6 The Kasbah of Saladin

MUSIC PLOT

ACT I

Overture

1. Solo	Dame Dollop
2. Duet	Dame Dollop and Tommy
3. Solo	Saladin
4. Solo	Hasan the Bandit
5. Duet	Oshgosh and Babu
6. Duet	Hasan and Tommy

ACT II

7. Dance	Dancing Girls
8. Audience participation number	Dame Dollop and Ibn Dun
9. Song and dance	The Evil Yasmin, Dame Dollop, Ibn Dun
10. Dance	Dancing Girls and Dame Dollop
11. Dance	Tommy
12. Ensemble number	The company

Provision is made for nine songs plus three dance routines, as above. There is also a requirement for incidental music where indicated in the stage directions.

The original production employed several pastiches of popular songs, with lyrics re-written to fit the action in the play. It's honestly not too difficult to think of suitable songs if you put your mind to it. Classic pop bands boasting large repertoires of well-known hits provide particularly fertile territory for parody — Abba and Queen are good examples. Owing to copyright restrictions however, it is not possible to suggest specific numbers in the present script.

PRODUCTION NOTES: SETTINGS AND EFFECTS

There is really only a handful of main settings in this panto. A forestage area in front of the main tabs would be a great advantage, allowing minor scenes to be played out in front of the curtain, whilst the major scenes are set or struck. Settings are described in some detail in the text — although this is intended to provide a feel for the scene, rather than a precise prescription for scenery. (I don't think, for instance, that there are going to be too many companies who are going to go as far as building fully plumbed-in, tinkling fountains!) This doesn't really matter, because simple sets, well executed, will prove quite sufficient. It's also remarkably easy to establish a middle-eastern scene— a Moorish archway or two, a striped awning here, a palm tree there, a few pots, jars, baskets and kilims, and you're away.

There are a couple of special effects called for, and it's probably worth exploring these in some detail. These effects may at first appear difficult to achieve, but it's usually possible to find a backstage bod with the requisite ingenuity and technical skills to rig the necessary. And if not — don't panic. There are other ways around both effects.

The magic carpet which is required to fly down and land on stage, can be accomplished by a relatively simple arrangement involving a small running frame or trolley (constructed from Dexion or similar) suspended from grooved nylon wheels (like a sliding wardrobe door) running on overhead parallel wires.

The trolley is pulled to and fro by a rope in the same way as a curtain. The carpet itself is made rigid by attachment to a sheet of hardboard, and this is then suspended beneath the trolley using sturdy transparent fishing line. Four strands of fishing line, in fact – one attached to each of the four corners of the carpet.

The four strands of fishing line pass up through four small pulley-wheels — one pulley mounted beneath each corner of the Dexion trolley — and thereafter, the four strands are taken together, and attached to an anchoring point high on the side wall, stage right.

The trolley is pre-set overhead, stage left, with the fishing line stretched taut to its anchoring point on the opposite wall. When the rope is pulled, the

trolley is drawn along the wires (stage left to stage right) and as the trolley transverses the stage, so slack is released in the fishing line, causing the sheet of hardboard, with carpet attached, to gracefully descend.

With judicious lighting, the fishing line can be rendered invisible, creating the simple but highly effective illusion of a magic carpet flying down from high overhead stage left, to land neatly stage right.

Ideally, a duplicate carpet should be available for its other appearances, to avoid having to dismantle the flying carpet each time after Act I, Scene 2.

If all this sounds too difficult, it is of course perfectly acceptable for your magic carpet to simply descend vertically from above – but it's a jolly good effect if you can manage the Rolls-Royce version!

Another impressive effect is the Indian rope trick featured in Act II, Scene 3. This is actually quite straightforward. A length of transparent fishing line is secured to the end of a length of heavy rope, coiled in an Ali-Baba basket. The line is pulled slowly up from overhead, creating the illusion of the rope snaking up of its own accord. Once the rope has risen above the sightline of the audience, it can be made fast to an anchoring point by a member of the stage crew aloft, allowing Tommy to then descend from above.

This effect is clearly dependent on having enough overhead space to rig some sort of easily-accessed platform for two people. And on the actress playing the part of Tommy being agile enough (and brave enough) to shin down a rope! Some practice ropework in a school gym is strongly recommended! The alternative is simply to have Tommy emerging from the Ali-Baba basket, but this does rather sacrifice the spectacle!

One final tip: lychees stuffed with Liquorice Allsorts make plausible sheep eyeballs for Saladin to pop into his mouth! You might even offer a few of these treats around the audience!

CHARACTERISATION AND COSTUME

The characters in *Arabian Knights* are largely struck from the tried and tested mould of traditional panto, and there's not much to say about them. On a few specifics however:

Oshgosh should be a portly rascal in a striped kaftan and fez, whilst **Babu** is a towering Tuareg, swathed in fearsome black robes. Their coshes should be made from lengths of foam rubber pipe cladding.

Al Kazeltzah was envisaged as a vastly superior being, looking down his nose at the scheming mortals he is bound to serve. In the original production however, the actor playing the part decided to camp it up — which happened to work extremely well. It can be played either way. Al Kazeltzah should have bright green skin, a shaven head, and a huge pot belly. He should wear voluminous pantaloons and ornate curly slippers. Pyro flash-bangs and cymbal clashes should accompany his every appearance and disappearance, and his final escape from the magic lamp can be celebrated with a confetti or glitter cannon — funds permitting!

Ali-Kat is played as a washed-out hippie who exists in a hallucinogenic fug and speaks in a kind of cod-sixties patois. He should be attired in ragged Middle Eastern garb, with flower power overtones.

Saladin. Probably the most important thing about Saladin is to pronounce his name properly! In Britain, the name Saladin tends to be delivered (history teachers are the main culprits) as *salad-in*. To invest the character with an authentic note of Arabic menace, it should be pronounced *sal ah-deen*.

Mustapha Spit is a typical pantomime animal. The individual who plays the rear end will need a water pistol for one particular effect!

In terms of extras: in the original production we were fortunate enough to have a bevy of teenage nymphets on hand, and thus incorporated a troupe of dancing girls in full harem costume — a vision in gossamer and glitter. Two specific opportunities are provided for dancers, but others could easily be added in. There is no adult chorus as such, but plenty of opportunity to involve people as palace guards, wives, food-tasters, courtiers, merchants, hawkers, etc., etc.

Richard Lloyd

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For Lisa

PROLOGUE

Overture

Darkness. There are three figures on stage. C *is Haroun the Storyteller, a turbanned, bearded ancient, who sits cross-legged upon a pile of cushions, an oil lamp beside him. To the* R *is Richard Lionheart, a frozen figure clad in glittering mail and heraldic surcoat with gold lions couchant upon a scarlet field, his face hidden within a great helm, a gleaming broadsword raised high in his right hand. To the* L *is Saladin, frozen, clad in swirling black robes, scimitar in hand*

A single spot comes up on Haroun and his oil lamp lights up

Haroun (*addressing the audience*) Salaam. Welcome, travellers, to the house of Haroun the Storyteller ...May your water bags never be empty. May there always be salt on your table. Come with me now to a magical Eastern realm — the land of a thousand and one Arabian Nights. I will show you the desert sands, where wild tribesmen, clad all in robes as black as night, race proud Arab stallions, pure white as the high snows of the Hindu Kush. I will show you the shimmering towers of marvellous cities, where dashing bandits scale the sheer walls of the Sultan's kasbah, to steal lissom concubines from beneath the noses of corpulent Pashas. And I will show you the lush, palm-fringed oases, where the spice caravans pause to water their camels, and trade a dozen nubile slave-girls for a single pouch of priceless saffron... Tonight, for my esteemed guests, a very special treat ... A strange and wonderful tale, from the time when the white-skinned Infidel came to the desert land with fire and sword, to carve a Kingdom they named *Outremer* – The Realm Beyond The Seas. At their head, Richard Lionheart — a ferocious fighter he.

A spot comes up on Richard

First among the warrior Kings of Christendom. Against him – Saladin.

A spot comes up on Saladin

Cunning as the fox. Deadly as the cobra. Ruthless as the scorpion. Richard and Saladin — Titans, whose epic battles are passed from history unto

legend, as surely as the Mountains of the Moon will one day crumble into the sands of the Sahara. But let us begin at the beginning. Not in the teeming, sun-scorched streets of Old Baghdad — but ten thousand leagues distant. In a fabled land where — it is written — the rain falls more freely than the grains of sand run through a monkey's fingers. Where the sun so seldom sheds its warmth, that almonds, dates, and lemons cannot grow ... A land known as England ...

Black-out

Scene 1

England. 1187. Outside a grimy hovel in a turnip patch, which is now the sprawling 21st Century town in which you live

A voice is heard

Dame (*off*) Tommy? (*She bellows*) *Tommy*! Oh, knot me knickers! Where has that dratted child got to this time?!

Brat, a small, ragged adolescent, charges on. He saunters over to stand outside the hovel

Brat (*shouting*) Oi! Dollop! Message!

Dame Dollop enters from her hovel

Dame Don't you Dollop me, you cheeky little sauce-box! It's Dame Dollop to you, understand? *Dame* Dollop.

Brat nods mutely

Good. Right. Now ... Call me again — properly this time — using the appropriate form of address.

Dame Dollop goes back into her hovel

Pause

Brat Oi! Lardbucket! Do you want this message or don't you?!
Dame (*charging out*) Right, monster! That's it! I'm going to paddle your little bottom! (*She makes a grab for Brat*)
Brat (*evading the Dame with ease*) Blimey! You'd need ruddy big mitts to paddle your bottom!

Dame Oooooooh!!! Just you wait 'til I get hold of you! (*She stops in her tracks and peers suspiciously at Brat*) 'Ere! Wait a minute ... What's this message then?
Brat It's from Tommy.
Dame Oh yus?
Brat Yus. Tommy's down in Seven Acre Meadow practising archery, and shan't be home for tea.
Dame Not again!
Brat Tommy's going to be a crusader, like King Richard.
Dame No Tommy flamin' well isn't.
Brat Tommy's going to be a knight in armour.
Dame That's what Tommy thinks.
Brat (*shrugging*) Oh well ... That's the message ... See ya, Dollop.

Brat saunters off

Dame (*shouting after him*) And don't call me Dollop!

Dame Dollop turns and catches sight of the audience

Ooooh! Hallo you lot! Didn't see you sitting down there in the Twiglet Zone! How are you?

Tentative audience participation

Oh dear! That's not very promising, is it? Now there's a lot of this, so we might as well start as we mean to go on! Now then, I'll say: "Hallo you lot – how are you?" and you all shout back: "Hallo Dame Dollop – how's yerself?" Will you do that for me?

Audience participation

Right then ... Here goes ... Hallo, you lot! How are you?

Audience participation

I'm very well — thank you for asking ... There! That wasn't too painful, was it? So nice to establish a rapport, don't you think? Anyway, what do you think about my Tommy, eh? Playing at soldiers – again! Honestly! I mean I wouldn't mind, only Tommy's a girl, you see ... That's right. Thomasina. She's my niece — only she lives here with me most of the time. Oh, she's the biggest tomboy you've ever met, is Tommy! Always getting into scrapes, and having adventures! And she doesn't seem to be interested in boys at all! Now, I call that very odd, because it's a well-known fact that all little girls like little boys, and all little boys like little girls – don't they, children?

Audience participation

Don't they? Oh, well ... Just wait 'til you reach my age, girls ... You won't be so picky, then! Anyway, are you all looking forward to Christmas? (*Or: Did you all enjoy Christmas then?*) Are you? (*Did you?*) What are you having (*What did you have*) for Christmas Dins then?

Audience participation

Turkey? Really? And roast spuds? And sprouts? And all the trimmings? Cor! You lucky things, I dunno! And mince pies! Some people have all the luck ... Do you know what I've got (*I had*) for Christmas Dinner?

Audience participation

Roast turnip. With turnip sauce. And turnip pudding for afters. (*Dolefully*) That's what comes of living in a turnip patch ... It's not much fun living in (*local town*) in the twelfth century, I can tell you ...

SONG 1
Dame Dollop

At the end of the song Tommy enters. She is obviously a girl, although clad in boyish clothes of jerkin, hose and boots, and wearing a short sword at her side

Tommy Hallo Dolly!
Dame Oooh! That sounds like the cue for another song!
Tommy (*hastily*) Well it isn't! Is tea ready?
Dame No, it ruddy well isn't! I got a message from your horrid little sidekick, Brat, to say that you'd be late home.
Tommy Oh. Sorry ... I finished archery early. Then I trounced all the boys from the village at swordfighting, so I thought I'd come home to make some more arrows.
Dame Swordfighting! Arrows! Oh Thomasina, really! I do wish you'd start to behave like a girl for a change.
Tommy But I'm not a girl, Auntie. I am fully developed ...
Dame Yes. I can see that ... What I want to know is, why a fully developed young woman like you doesn't have a boyfriend.
Tommy I haven't got time for boyfriends! I am going to serve King Richard! The one true love of my life!
Dame The love of your life! Huh! You're kidding yourself ... What makes you think that the King of England is going to be remotely interested in a grubby little tyke like you?
Tommy Ever since we met last summer ——

Dame Oh, here we go ... (*She mimics Tommy's voice*) "I stroked his horse ..."
Tommy (*dreamily*) I stroked his horse ...
Dame (*darkly*) It trod on you ...
Tommy He spoke to me — Richard spoke to me ...
Dame (*in a deep voice*) "How dare you touch me horse, you filthy peasant ... "
Tommy He blew me a kiss ...
Dame He flobbed on you!
Tommy His men helped me to my feet ...
Dame They arrested you for obstructing the Royal personage. You spent three days in stocks.
Tommy He was so young, so handsome, so ... (*she blushes*) manly.
Dame Yes! Yes! That's more like it!
Tommy (*her eyes shining*) I vowed to be just like him!
Dame Oh Gawd ...
Tommy I have to follow him, Auntie. I must embrace my destiny. I am going to become a crusader. A Knight of the Cross. I take ship for Arabia this very night.
Dame Oh no you don't, my girl! What about me, eh? If you go swanning off to Araby, I'll be left all on me own ... I'm not spending Christmas all by meself ...

Patriotic music plays

Tommy I have to go, Auntie. I have to find King Richard, and join his crusade to free The Holy Land from the evil hand of Saladin. For how can we truly celebrate Christmas knowing that Jerusalem itself, the Holy City, lies in the Saracen's bloody grip?
Dame Just you watch me!
Tommy (*reproachfully*) Auntie!
Dame Oh, I dunno! P'raps you're right ...
Tommy It will be a marvellous adventure, Auntie.
Dame But what about the danger?
Tommy It wouldn't be an adventure without an element of risk. Believe me, Auntie ... This is my mission.
Dame Impossible.
Tommy I have been called.
Dame So have I, and I won't tell you what ... (*To the audience*) 'Ere! What do you lot think? Should I let her go adventuring or not?

Audience participation

Troublemakers! You just want to get your money's worth, don't you?

(*Relenting*) Oh, all right then ... You can go ...

Tommy (*throwing her arms around Dame Dollop*) Yippeeee!

Dame But you're going to take some vittles with you. I'm not having any niece of mine eating goats' dangly bits! I'll do you a proper packed lunch — with a nice soft toilet roll.

Tommy Can't I have a proper packed lunch with a nice hard-boiled egg?

Dame Why?

Tommy I find the toilet roll sticks in my teeth.

Dame You're not supposed to eat the toilet roll, you great chump! (*She sniffles*) Oh, Tommy ... I won't half miss you, our kid! Come 'ere ...

Dame Dollop and Tommy embrace

SONG 2
Dame Dollop and Tommy

They exit

Black-out

SCENE 2

The Kasbah of Saladin

There is an immense pile of tasselled velvet cushions. Swirling sea-green silks cascade from the vaulted ceiling. The blue smoke of burning incense curls upwards, wreathing gilded Moorish archways

Drums sound a barbaric rhythm

Saladin sweeps on with Onion Bhaji, his Grand Vizier, scurrying after him

Saladin Well, dog? What tasty morsels of news do you bring your master?

Saladin sits atop the pile of cushions. Onion Bhaji drops dutifully on to all fours and Saladin uses his back as a footstool

Onion Bhaji O Saladin! Mightiest of the Overmighty! The Infidel armies surround Jerusalem! They hammer upon the very gates of the old city! Every commander you have sent against them has failed! Jerusalem must surely fall to the Crusaders!

Saladin boots Onion Bhaji away

Saladin Shiftless spawn of a sand lizard! How dare you bring me such miserable tidings! I will have your flabby body sliced into a thousand titbits and fed to my leopards!

Onion Bhaji O your Immensity! O defender of the utterly indefensible! A snivelling slave craves your infinite mercy! I speak only the truth!
Saladin You speak in riddles, dog! Fortunately, I have one adviser who is more astute than your miserable self, O pox-ridden son of a dung beetle!
Onion Bhaji O Saladin! Swift and terrible with the killer insult! Surely you cannot intend to summon the dread Genie, Al Kazeltzah?
Saladin That is precisely what I intend, O thrice-accurséd child of a scorpion! Fetch the enchanted lamp from its secret resting place!
Onion Bhaji But master ...
Saladin (*thundering*) Fetch, dog!
Onion Bhaji (*baying*) Aroooooooof!

Onion Bhaji exits, scrabbling backwards on his hands and knees

Saladin (*to the audience*) I am surrounded by imbeciles! Cowardly sheep and grinning idiots ... But the Slave of The Lamp will tell me how to defeat the Infidel. He will tell me how to break their iron stranglehold upon Jerusalem! And then I, Saladin, Amir of Baghdad, Caliph of Damascus and all Sinai, Defender of The Utterly Indefensible, will slash and burn and sweep the Christian rabble before me, and drive them back into the boiling sea! Ha ha ha ha ha!

Audience participation

Be silent, you white-skinned dogs! Or I will have you flayed alive with a blunt letter opener!

Audience participation

Oh yes I will!

Audience participation continues

Onion Bhaji crawls back in — now clutching an ornate and burnished Turkish lamp

Onion Bhaji Here is the Lamp, O Wickedest of the Wicked!
Saladin (*snatching the lamp*) Excellent! Now we shall see the light! (*Boom boom. He caresses the lamp*) Now observe, O slimy excrement of an incontinent camel! I rub the lamp three times, thus — and the invocation is made! (*He rubs the lamp*) One ... two ... three!

There is a blinding flash, smoke and a zing of cymbals

The smoke clears to reveal the towering form of Al Kazeltzah the genie, who is green, with shaven head and an impressive pot belly

Al Kazeltzah I am the Slave of the Lamp! A thousand years have I journeyed, from the seventy-seventh dimension, to answer your call. Why have you summoned me thus, O Saladin, illegitimate offspring of a desert vulture?

Saladin Greetings, O Slave of the Lamp! I see your manners have not improved since our last encounter ... Perhaps you would like me to banish you to the frozen wastes of the Arctic for another year?

Al Kazeltzah (*shivering*) Brrrrr! Command and I obey, O wise one.

Saladin That's more like it. Now then ... I wish to know how to defeat the accurséd Infidel that besiege Jerusalem.

Al Kazeltzah Hmmmm ... Enlighten me. Who is their leader?

Saladin A swaggering, beer-swilling, Norman Kinglet. The puffed-up brigand grandly titles himself "The Lionheart" ...Pah! (*He spits*)

Onion Bhaji also spits — but succeeds only in getting spittle on his master's rich cloak. He attempts to wipe it off, but is smartly cuffed away

Al Kazeltzah Ah ... Richard of England ...

Saladin That's the boyo ... A right little tearaway.

Al Kazeltzah Well, it's simple enough ...

Saladin Is it?

Al Kazeltzah Of course. Elementary. Apply the first rule of terror. When the enemy cuts loose in your country, strike back at the very heart of his! You must dispatch agents into England.

Saladin To what purpose?

Al Kazeltzah To seize his Queen.

Saladin Bah! He doesn't have a Queen!

Al Kazeltzah Of course he does. He's a King isn't he?

Saladin He has no wives. (*Aside*) Disgusting western degenerate! I have eighty-six myself ...

Al Kazeltzah Then he has a sweetheart ...

Saladin I doubt it. The bone-headed brute is obsessed with manly pastimes — I blame the public school system ...

Al Kazeltzah Even so ... (*With certainty*) There is one that loves him more than life itself ...

Saladin (*intrigued*) Can this be so? How do you know this?

Al Kazeltzah I know many things, O Saladin. I am keeper of a thousand and one dark secrets. I am key-holder to ten thousand infuriating riddles! I know the answer to conundrums which have defeated even the ——

Saladin (*interrupting rudely*) All right! All right! Spare me the mystical Eastern claptrap! Where do I find this sweetheart?

Al Kazeltzah In a dung hovel, in a turnip patch, in a swamp.

Saladin (*in distaste*) It sounds a quite disgusting slum.
Al Kazeltzah It is known as (*local town*).
Saladin Hmmm. A fitting name for a disgusting slum ...

Audience participation

And once I have the girl in my power?
Al Kazeltzah You have a bargaining counter, O Bigheaded One. If Richard pulls back his armies from Jerusalem — the girl lives. If not ... (*He draws one pudgy green finger across his throat*)
Saladin Ha ha ha ha! Splendid!

Audience participation

But wait! A sea voyage to England could take three months! Jerusalem could fall in three days! How can I reach this girl in time?
Al Kazeltzah With this, O Mighty Mouth of Mesopotamia ... (*He claps his hands*)

A magic carpet floats down from overhead with a frisson of spooky Eastern music

Please to accept this wondrous flying carpet, with your slave's humblest compliments ...

The carpet settles on the floor. Marvelling, Saladin steps on to it

Saladin Fabulous! Ha ha ha ha!!!! You have served me well, O Slave of the Lamp. I am almost moved to release you from the spell of imprisonment which binds you to this tawdry ornament!
Al Kazeltzah (*eagerly*) A thousand million gratitudes, O Munificence!
Saladin (*drily*) I said – *almost* ...

Al Kazeltzah emits a spine-chilling howl of rage. Saladin simply smiles and snaps his fingers. There is another blinding flash

Al Kazeltzah disappears

(*Picking up the lamp*) But really — how could I possibly afford to relinquish so invaluable a slave? Ha ha ha ha! (*He crosses back to the magic carpet*) Behold, reptile! An amazing, magical carpet — truly, the handiwork of the immortals.
Onion Bhaji (*winking at the audience*) Allied be praised!
Saladin (*handing Onion Bhaji the lamp*) Take this back to its resting place,

vomit-face. Then summon Shadizah, captain of my palace guard. Instruct him to pick his two best men, and send them to me.

Onion Bhaji Yes, your Immensity! I wet myself to obey! Er ... There was just one more, teensy-weensy little matter, O Immaculate One ...

Saladin (*irritably*) Well? Spit it out!

Onion Bhaji hawks horribly and prepares to spit. Striking like a cobra, Saladin shoots out a bony claw and grips his Grand Vizier's chubby cheeks tightly between his thumb and forefinger

On second thoughts — don't. Just tell me.

Onion Bhaji swallows and looks distinctly queasy for a moment

Onion Bhaji I shudder to mention it, Majesty, in your glowering presence ...

Saladin (*shouting*) *Tell me!*

Onion Bhaji It concerns — (*he gulps*) Hasan the Bandit ...

Saladin (*bellowing*) *What did you say?*

Onion Bhaji (*shouting back*) *Hasan the Bandit!*

Saladin (*seizing Onion Bhaji by the throat*) *How dare you mention that name in my glowering presence?*

Onion Bhaji (*squealing*) You see! You see!

Saladin relents, and releases Onion Bhaji. Saladin turns away, repeating the hated name to himself

Saladin (*muttering*) Hasan the Bandit — curse him! (*He rounds on Onion Bhaji*) What's he done this time?

Onion Bhaji Another spice caravan, O Mighty One! Seized and plundered! He is fast becoming a thorn in your — otherwise wholly impregnable — side ...

Saladin Yes. I know he is ...(*He muses aloud*) You know, sometimes I wonder if he and the curséd Lionheart, are not working hand in glove ...

Onion Bhaji (*winking at the audience again*) Then he would be Lionheart's puppet!

Saladin Shut up, you dribbling fount of imbecility!

Onion Bhaji Yes, master. Shutting up now, master.

Saladin How has he managed to elude my guards for so long?

Onion Bhaji (*with a note of admiration in his voice*) He is a master of cunning disguise, Lord ——

Detecting the admiration in Onion Bhaji's voice, Saladin looks sharply at him

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