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SF PERUSALS

Just So

by Jan Silverman

Music by Louise Lanzilotti

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JUST SO was first performed at Temple University on October 31, 1981, under the direction of Jan Silverman, with the following cast:

KIPLING/PYTHON/PARSEE/DJINNI/CAT . . . . . Jay Hoover

HIPPO/MOTHER JAGUAR/
BIG GOD NQONG/WOMAN . . . . . Karen Tonjes

OSTRICH/YELLOW DOG DINGO/
TORTOISE/DOG . . . . . Diane DiJosie

GIRAFFE/KANGAROO/RHINOCEROS/MAN . . . . . Richard Mailman

ELEPHANT'S CHILD/COW/LITTLE JAGUAR
/LITTLE GOD NQA . . . . . Donna Foley

KOLOKOLO BIRD/CROCODILE/MIDDLE GOD NQUING
/PORCUPINE/HORSE. . . . . Nina Hodoruk

THE CAMEL was played on alternate performances by Matthew Jones and Oberon Benasutti

CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

KIPLING

CAMEL

ELEPHANT'S CHILD

OSTRICH

GIRAFFE

HIPPOPOTAMUS

KOLOKOLO BIRD

PYTHON

CROCODILE

KANGAROO

LITTLE GOD NQA

MIDDLE GOD NQUING

BIG GOD NQUONG

YELLOW DOG DINGO

PARSEE

RHINOCEROS

MOTHER JAGUAR

LITTLE JAGUAR (DOFFLES)

PORCUPINE

TORTOISE

DJINNI

MAN

WOMAN

DOG

HORSE

COW

CAT

Producers desiring a smaller cast can explore doubling. In the original production the double casting broke down as follows:

KIPLING/PYTHON/PARSEE/DJINNI/CAT

HIPPO/MOTHER JAGUAR/BIG GOD NQONG/WOMAN

OSTRICH/YELLOW DOG DINGO/TORTOISE/DOG

GIRAFFE/KANGAROO/RHINOCEROS/MAN

ELEPHANT'S CHILD/COW/LITTLE JAGUAR/LITTLE GOD NQA

KOLOKOLO BIRD/CROCODILE/MIDDLE GOD NQUING/PORCUPINE/HORSE

THE CAMEL

ABOUT THE PLAY

JUST SO should be presented as simply as possible, in a spirit of fun, inviting the audience to join in the pretending. Emphasis should be on actor-audience interaction, and the physical and vocal creativity of the cast.

The set for the original Temple University Children's Theatre production consisted of a series of sturdy wooden boxes constructed on an 18" module. There were four cubes, two rectangular boxes (18" x 18" x 9")one half cube (18" x 18" x 9"), and one very low platform which served as the bank of the Limpopo River. They were painted in bright, jungle-like colors. The set pieces were moved by the actors in full view of the audience, providing for a continuous flow of action. A transparent scrim hung upstage, allowing for projected effects, such as the Kangaroo's silhouette as he jumped, and a palm tree, as well as intense color washes.

The costumes were basic. Actors wore sweatpants, T-shirts and sneakers in colors appropriate to the characters they played. The actress playing the Kolokolo Bird and the Crocodile wore green; the Camel wore tan, and so forth. To these were added suggestive costume pieces that could be easily donned and removed. The Ostrich, for example, wore a tutu (right over her sweatpants!), and a stocking cap, the Python wore a long, striped sack and actually wriggled across the stage floor without the use of his arms; the Crocodile wore a green headband, from which dangled long Bo Derek braids done with green beads, and green gloves. The elephant's child wore a specially constructed head mask which, while showing the actor's face, featured elephant ears and a trunk which rolled up to create a bulbous nose. During the struggle with the crocodile, the nose was pulled out and unrolled to become the trunk.

THE STORIES

Prologue

Hump Says the Camel – Part One

"The Elephant's Child"

First Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo

Hump Says the Camel – Part Two

"How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin"

"The Beginning of Armadillos"

Second Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo

Hump Says the Camel – Part Three

"The Cat That Walks by Himself"

Third Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo

The Camel's Hash is Settled

This play is dedicated to
my children
Allison & Jason
my grandchildren
Claire, Nathan, Leo & Alexandra
and my husband
Leon

PROLOGUE

(The stage is dark. Light comes up on **KIPLING**. *He is relaxed, seated or standing at ease. Blocks and other actors are onstage but in dim light. The mood is warm, thoughtful, mellow.)*

KIPLING. The beginnings of things. First times. How, for example, this hand – became a hand. Or how this box – got to be a box after starting out life as a tree. Or how I – Rudyard Kipling, traveler, storyteller – got to be so full of wondering. *(movement, lightening mood, increasing tempo)* But I could never wonder like a sensible man – or, at any rate, the way people say a sensible man should wonder. I wonder about things that end up making me smile – like, for instance, how the elephant got his long, long trunk. It looks like somebody just took hold and pulled! Or – how the camel got his hump, or how the Rhinoceros – got such a wrinkly skin and such a bad temper. *(He makes a scowly face.)* Or how you – *(to a child in the audience)* got such beautiful *(blond, black, red, brown, etc.)* hair. And then all the things I wonder about come and live inside my head until I just have to get them out! I mean, how would you like to have a rhinoceros inside your head? What a racket he makes! So I get them all out by putting them someplace else. I put them – into stories. And in the stories I answer my own questions, in my own way. What's inside my head today? An elephant, a kangaroo, a jaguar, a crocodile, a tortoise!

(The animals are shaped by **KIPLING** *as he goes to each actor.)*

And the camel – has anybody seen my camel?

(Animals say "no" in their various personae.)

Well, maybe he'll turn up.

FULL COMPANY. *(singing)* *

HOW DID THE CAMEL GET HIS HUMP, I'D REALLY LIKE TO KNOW:
DID HE ALWAYS HAVE THAT LUMP SO MANY YEARS AGO?
I'LL TELL YOU NOW IF YOU'LL COME WITH ME
AND OPEN UP YOUR EYES,
I SURMISE
THAT IT HAPPENED
JUST SO!
HOW DID THE ELEPHANT GET HIS TRUNK, I'D REALLY LIKE TO KNOW
AND HOW DID THE RHINO GET HIS SKIN,
IT HANGS LIKE ROLLS OF DOUGH!
I'LL TELL YOU NOW IF YOU'LL COME WITH ME
AND OPEN UP YOUR EARS.
IT APPEARS
THAT IT HAPPENED
JUST SO!
WHY IS THE DOGGIE MAN'S BEST FRIEND, WHO SLEEPS ON A COZY SHELF,
WHILE THE MOUSE IS WOMAN'S ENEMY, AND THE CAT JUST WALKS
BY HIMSELF?
OH, HOW DID THE ANIMALS GET SO STRANGE
BEFORE THEY CAME TO THE ZOO?
I'VE GOT SOME EXPLANATIONS, BUT THEY'RE NOT NECESSARILY TRUE.
I'LL TELL YOU NOW, IF YOU'LL COME WITH ME
MY TONGUE IS IN MY CHEEK
JUST LAST WEEK
IT ALL HAPPENED
JUST SO!

HUMP SAYS THE CAMEL. – PART ONE

(Break from song into animal characters. One person becomes the **CAMEL***, enters, and looks disdainfully around.)*

CAMEL. Humph! *(walks off)*

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*For music see page 50.

FIRST ACTOR. Who was that?

KIPLING. That's my camel! He lives all alone in the middle of the howling desert.

SECOND ACTOR. Just the place for him – he's a howler himself!

FIRST ACTOR. What's a howler?

SECOND ACTOR. A terrible mistake!

KIPLING. Yes! And he never does any work. He's most 'scruciatingly idle!

FIRST ACTOR. I heard he just eats sticks and thorns and pickles!

CAMEL. *(sticking his head in for a moment)* Humph!

ALL OTHER ACTORS. Go away!

(He does, pursued by all but the **ELEPHANT'S CHILD***, who takes centerstage and begins, having been encouraged and placed there by* **KIPLING***, who then exits.)*

"THE ELEPHANT'S CHILD"

ELEPHANT. In the High and Far-Off Times, the Elephant had no trunk. He had only a blackish, bulgy nose that he could wriggle from side to side… *(He demonstrates.)* But he couldn't pick up things with it. There was one Elephant – an Elephant's Child… *(He becomes the elephant's child.)* And I am full of 'satiable curtiosity. That means I ask ever so many questions.

*(***OSTRICH** *enters, struts, preens, then sees something approaching offstage. She gives a cry of alarm, then buries her head in the sand. The* **ELEPHANT** *speaks without turning his head to look at the* **OSTRICH***.)*

Good morning, Aunt Ostrich.

(approaches, looking at **OSTRICH'S** *rump, then taps her on the shoulder)*

Aunt Ostrich?

OSTRICH. *(startled, jumps up, then is annoyed)* What do you want? Can't you see I'm hidden?

ELEPHANT. Oh Aunt Ostrich, why do you stick your head in the sand? It looks very funny, Aunt Ostrich, and why do you say you're hidden when I can see you very plainly, Aunt Ostrich and oh, Aunt Ostrich, just look at your tail feathers, and could you tell me, why do your tail feathers grow just so? *(All this in one breath.)*

OSTRICH. Questions, questions, questions! Here's that, for your 'satiable curtiosity! *(She smacks him and struts off.)*

ELEPHANT. Ohhhh!

(He rubs his backside and looks off resentfully at **OSTRICH**. *Enter Uncle* **GIRAFFE**.*)*

GIRAFFE. Good morning, Elephant's Child. *(He is tall and vain.)*

ELEPHANT. Good morning, Uncle Giraffe.

*(***GIRAFFE** *carefully combs his hair, using a pocket mirror, then smiles lovingly at himself in the mirror. He finds a tall branch and begins eating his breakfast.)*

Oh, Uncle Giraffe, why are you eating that top branch? Are the leaves really better up on the top, is that why you like them, or would it really just hurt your neck to bend down to get the low ones and how come your neck is so long anyway, can you tie it in a knot? Did you ever try, and what makes your skin so spotty?

GIRAFFE. Spotty? SPOTTY!? WHERE!? *(He consults pocket mirror, anxiously.)* Oh, you detestable child! Here's that for your 'satiable curtiosity! *(Gives him a smack and swishes off.)*

ELEPHANT. Well, gee whiz!

(He pats his increasingly sore rump again. Enter **HIPPOPOTAMUS**, *terribly hung over.)*

HIPPO. Oh, it's you, is it, Elephant's Child.

ELEPHANT. *(loudly and excitedly)* Good morning, Aunt Hippopotamus!

HIPPO. Sh-sh, please! Auntie has a headache.

ELEPHANT. A headache, Aunt Hippopotamus? Gee, that's too bad, can I rub your head for you, or how about an old banana skin to lay across your forehead, do you think that would make you feel better, how long has your head hurt you anyway, and what did you mean last night when you said you felt pickled, I thought only pickles could be pickled, and oh, gosh, Aunt Hippopotamus, what makes your eyes so red?

HIPPO. Oooh, my poor head! QUIET! Here's that for your 'satiable curtiosity! *(Another smack and she gropes her way offstage.)*

ELEPHANT. In trouble again. *(to audience)* Did you ever get into trouble for asking too many questions? Didn't it make you mad? Everybody says if you want to learn something you have to ask a question, and then you ask and they give you a swat instead of an answer! And I have so much that I wonder about. I wonder why they always think I'm naughty when all I want is just to understand! I wonder why they have to be so haughty And think they're just so absolutely grand! I wonder if my whole life is a blunder. I guess I'll never ever be a winner. And, oh, I've got another thing I wonder – What does the crocodile eat for his dinner?

HIPPO, **OSTRICH & GIRAFFE.** *(reentering)* HUSH!

OSTRICH. Here's a swat for always asking questions.

HIPPO. And here's a swat for making too much noise!

GIRAFFE. And here's a swat for always being pesty!

ALL. Now go and play with your expensive toys!

(All stalk off. **ELEPHANT** *is left crying. Enter the* **KOLO-KOLO BIRD**.*)*

KOLO. Hello, there, Elephant's child! What's the matter, no questions today?

ELEPHANT. Oh, hello, Kolokolo Bird.

KOLO. What's wrong, Elephant's Child?

ELEPHANT. My Aunt Ostrich spanked me, and my Aunt Hippopotamus spanked me, and my Uncle Giraffe spanked me. They all spanked me for my 'satiable curtiosity. And I still want to know what the crocodile has for dinner!

KOLO. Well, why don't you find out for yourself?

ELEPHANT. Find out for myself? How can I do that? I don't even know where the crocodile lives.

KOLO. It's time you saw a bit of the world, Elephant's Child. The Crocodile lives in the great, grey-green greasy Limpopo River.

ELEPHANT. The great, grey-green greasy Limpopo River? *(aside)* An answer! Somebody finally gave me an answer! But Kolokolo bird, what does the Crocodile look like?

KOLO. You must go to the banks of the great grey-green greasy Limpopo River, all set about with fever trees, and answer your own question.

ELEPHANT. *(with sudden determination)* Yes. I will. It is time I saw a bit of the world and found out some answers for myself. Thank you, Kolokolo Bird – I'm on my way. *(exits, singing, "Limpopo River, here I come!")*

KOLO. "What does the crocodile eat for dinner?" Oh, you'll find out, Elephant's Child, you'll find out! *(laughs through this speech, building to loud shrieks, exits at end)*

ELEPHANT. *(Re-enters. He is now on the banks of the Limpopo.)* I guess this is it – the great grey-green greasy Limpopo River. Yes – there are fever trees all right.

*(***PYTHON** *enters and curls around a rock.)*

But where's the Crocodile? *(He sees the* **PYTHON**.*)* Oh! I wonder who that is! *(approaches)* Uh – sir? Ma'am? Who might you be?

PYTHON. I, my ignorant child? I am, of course, the Bi-Colored Python Rock-Snake. You, I presume, are an Elephant, or, at any rate, an Elephant's Child. Now kindly allow me to proceed with my slumbers.

ELEPHANT. 'Scuse me, but have you seen such a thing as a Crocodile in these promiscuous parts?

PYTHON. Have I seen a Crocodile? What will you think of next?

ELEPHANT. 'Scuse me, but could you kindly tell me what he has for dinner?

*(***PYTHON** *uncurls his tail and quickly swats the* **ELEPHANT**.*)*

PYTHON. There! Now let me sleep!

ELEPHANT. That is odd. My Aunt Ostrich and Aunt Hippopotamus and Uncle Giraffe have all spanked me for my 'satiable curtiosity – and I suppose this is the very same thing. Well, goodbye, Bi-Colored Python Rock-Snake. Here, let me help you get comfortably coiled. There now. Don't mind me.

(The **CROCODILE** *enters, slithering through the water.)*

I'll just find the Crocodile all by myself. I'll just sit on this log and wait until one comes along.

(He sits on the **CROCODILE**.*)*

CROCODILE. *(Notices the* **ELEPHANT'S CHILD***, looks up to him. Speaks with heavy irony.)* Quite comfy?

ELEPHANT. *(leaps up)* Oh! Why excuse me, but you see, I thought you were just an old log!

CROCODILE. Just an old log. I see. How flattering.

ELEPHANT. Uh-huh, but now I see you're not. Tell me, do you happen to have seen a crocodile in these promiscuous parts?

CROCODILE. *(moves toward* **ELEPHANT***)* A crocodile? You're looking for a crocodile, are you?

(He laughs loudly. The **ELEPHANT** *moves away.)*

Come hither, little one. Why do you ask such things?

ELEPHANT. 'Scuse me, but were you going to spank me for my 'satiable curtiosity? You see, all my fearsome family have just spanked me, and the Bi-Colored Python Rock-Snake has just spanked me the hardest of all, with his scalesome flailsome tail! So if it's all the same to you, I'd rather not be spanked any more!

CROCODILE. Come hither, little one, for I am the Crocodile!

ELEPHANT. *(eagerly)* You're the Crocodile! *(suspiciously)* Prove it.

CROCODILE. Very well. *(He suddenly bursts into loud weeping, keeps it up for a moment, then stops just as suddenly.)* There. Crocodile tears. That's how you know.

ELEPHANT. *(impressed)* Oh, you really are the Crocodile, aren't you? You are the very person I have been looking for all these long days! Will you tell me please, what do you have for dinner?

CROCODILE. Come hither, little one, I'll whisper it to you.

(The **ELEPHANT** *approaches, gets his head close to the* **CROCODILE'S** *mouth.)*

I think – I think today I will begin with – the Elephant's Child!

(He grabs the **ELEPHANT'S CHILD'***s nose between his teeth.)*

ELEPHANT. LED GO! YOU ARE HURTIG BE!

(A great pulling begins. The **PYTHON** *unfurls from the rock.)*

PYTHON. My young friend, if you do not now pull immediately and instantly, pull as hard as ever you can, it is my considered opinion that your large patent-leather acquaintance will jerk you into yonder stream before you can say Jack Robinson.

ELEPHANT. Huh?

PYTHON. Pull, you pitiful pachyderm, pull!

(The pulling increases, and the nose of the **ELEPHANT** *begins to stretch. The* **CROCODILE** *has the advantage.)*

ELEPHANT. This is too buch for be!

*(***PYTHON** *slithers to* **ELEPHANT'S CHILD** *and wraps himself around his hind legs.)*

PYTHON. Now let us devote ourselves seriously to a little high tension before this armor plated submarine

permanently sinks your battleship! *(aside)* That is the way all Bi-Colored Python Rock Snakes always talk.

(A great pulling action ensues. The **PYTHON** *and the* **ELEPHANT** *finally prevail. The* **CROCODILE** *falls into the water and the* **ELEPHANT'S CHILD** *falls back onto the* **PYTHON**.*)*

CROCODILE. Curse you, Bi-Colored Python Rock Snake! I'll even the score one of these days! *(He slithers off.)*

ELEPHANT. Oh, thank you, Bi-Colored Python Rock Snake! Python? Oh, there you are! *(He gets up.)* But oh, my poor, poor nose! *(He dips it into the Limpopo.)*

PYTHON. Just what do you think you're doing?

ELEPHANT. 'Scuse me, but my nose is badly out of shape, and I am waiting for it to shrink.

PYTHON. Then you will have to wait a long time. Some people don't know what's good for them.

ELEPHANT. You mean it'll never be the same again? I'll have to go through my whole life with this – this – huge thing? Why it's big enough to pack all my clothes in! It's like a suitcase – uh, a briefcase – uh…

PYTHON. Trunk?

ELEPHANT. That's it! A trunk!

PYTHON. *(aside)* I always did have a way with words.

ELEPHANT. Oh, but what will I do with a trunk? *(He discovers a fly on his shoulder and absently flicks it off, with his trunk, of course.)*

PYTHON. Vantage number one! You couldn't have done that with a mere smear nose. Don't you think it's warm?

(Impulsively, the **ELEPHANT** *dips his trunk into the river and gives himself a shower bath. He is delighted with his newfound ability.)*

Vantage number two! You couldn't have done that with a mere smear nose! Now how do you feel about being spanked again?

ELEPHANT. 'Scuse me, but I should not like it at all!

PYTHON. Well, if I am correct, I see your regrettable relatives off yonder, and they seem to be progressing in our direction. No doubt they are searching for you. Perhaps you will find another use for your trunk on this occasion!

(The Relatives enter, both relieved and angry.)

OSTRICH. So there you are at last, you naughty child! How dare you wander so far from home! We've been worried sick! Come here and be spanked for your 'satiable curtiosity!

ELEPHANT. Ha! I don't think you peoples know anything about spanking, but I do, and I'll show you!

(He gives **OSTRICH** *a whack on the behind with his trunk. It knocks her head-first into the sand.)*

HIPPO. Oh, bananas! Where did you learn that trick, and what have you done to your nose?

ELEPHANT. *(As he answers, he is chasing and swatting Aunt* **HIPPO***.)* I got a new one from the Crocodile! *(swat)* I asked him what he had for dinner *(swat)* and he gave me this to keep! *(swat)*

(Aunt **HIPPO** *retires.)*

GIRAFFE. Well, it's very useful but it looks very ugly!

*(***ELEPHANT** *grabs one of uncle* **GIRAFFE'S** *legs and hurls him into a hornet's nest.)*

Hornets! Hornets! Yowie! *(He runs off, yelling.)*

PYTHON. Didn't I say, Elephant's Child, that you would find a use for your trunk?

ELEPHANT. Oh, thank you, Python, dear friend! I've never felt so strong! So powerful! They'd better respect me now! *(He tastes one moment of utter glory.)* But gee, do you think I was a little rough on them? I guess they were really worried about me, huh? Maybe I'd better go and see. Oh, Aunt Hippo! Aunt Ostrich! Are you all right? *(He runs off.)*

PYTHON. There he goes – as strong as a hundred men now, but still a curious child at heart. Noses may change, but natures don't. How true, how true.

(He composes himself for sleep, still chatting away to the audience, as the **CROCODILE** *slips back onstage, takes him by the tail, and slowly pulls him off.)*

He would never have made the adjustment without me. Matter of fact, he would never have freed himself from the Crocodile's clutches without me. Brains. That's what I have. Brains. You have to be clever in this world. You can't let the next fellow put one over on you. *(He is off.)*

"FIRST SING-SONG OF OLD MAN KANGAROO"

(The **KANGAROO** *segments are spoken chants. They are strongly accentuated and rhythmically varied. The actors should find the natural rhythms and forward motion of the piece without becoming too sing-song. It is a delicate balance. Lines may be reassigned among the actors to suit the choreography.)*

KANGAROO. Not always was the kangaroo as now we do behold him. *(***KANGAROO** *displays his usual self.)*

ACTOR #2. But a different animal –

ACTOR #3. With four short legs

ALL. Short legs, short legs, short legs, hah!

*(***KANGAROO** *squats to show four short legs.)*

ACTOR #4. He was grey –

ACTOR #5. And he was woolly –

ACTOR #3. And his pride was inordinate –

*(***KANGAROO** *shows inordinate pride.)*

ACTOR #6. He danced on an outcrop in the middle of Australia –

ACTORS #2, 3, 6. And he went to the Little God Nqa.

KANGAROO. Little God Nqa?

NQA. Who is disturbing me?

KANGAROO. Little God, Little God –

NQA. It's 6 a.m.!

KANGAROO. Make me special…make me better…Make me different from all the other animals – by five this afternoon!

NQA. Make you special? Make you better? Make you different? Go away!

ACTOR #3. He was grey –

ACTOR #5. And he was wooly –

ACTOR #3. And his pride was inordinate!

ACTOR #2. He danced on a sandbank in the middle of Australia

ACTORS #3, 6. And he went to the Middle God Nquing.

KANGAROO. Middle God Nquing?

NQUING. What do you want with me?

KANGAROO. Middle God, Middle God –

NQUING. My breakfast's hot!

KANGAROO. Make me special…make me popular…Make me better than all the other animals by five this afternoon!

NQUING. Make you special? Make you better? Make you popular? Go away!

ACTOR #2. He was grey –

ACTOR #5. And he was woolly –

ACTOR #3. And his pride was –

ALL. INORDINATE!

ACTOR #2. He danced on an ashpit in the middle of Australia

ACTORS #2, 3, 4, 5. And he went to the Big God Nquong.

KANGAROO. Big God Nquong?

NQUONG. Who is addressing me?

KANGAROO. Big God, Big God –

NQUONG. You, watch your step!

KANGAROO. Make me better…make me different…Make me popular and wonder-fly run after by five this afternoon!

NQUONG. Make you different? Make you popular? Make you run after? Yes, I will! Dingo! Dingo! Yellow dog Dingo! Always hungry Dingo, sleeping in the sun! Dingo! Dingo! Wake up, Dingo! Do you see that gentleman dancing on the ashpit?

DINGO. What, that cat-rabbit?

NQUONG. Yep, that's him. He wants to be popular, And very much run after, Dingo, make him go!

ACTOR #5. Up jumped Dingo, yellow dog Dingo.

ACTOR #3. Always hungry Dingo

ACTOR #4. Up he jumped –

ALL. And grinned at Kangaroooooo….

ACTOR #5. Off went the proud Kangaroo

ACTOR #3. Like a bunny –

ACTOR #4. Like a bunny on his four little legs

ACTOR #3. Like a bunny – -

ACTOR #5. And the yellow dog Dingo –

ACTOR #4. Always hungry Dingo –

ACTOR #2. Grinning like a Jack-o-lantern

ALL. Flew after Kangaroo, phew!

ACTOR #5. And this ends the first part –

ACTOR #3. Of –

ACTOR #4. The –

ACTOR #2. Tale!

HUMP SAYS THE CAMEL. – PART TWO

(Break from Kangaroo sing-song. **CAMEL** *enters, looks everyone over, gives a couple of humphs, crosses to exit, turns back, and humphs again.)*

ACTOR #3. Oh, it's you again. Come here, Camel.

CAMEL. Humph!

ACTOR #2. Listen, instead of just sneering you could help out.

ACTOR #3. Yes! What about joining us?

ACTOR #4. You could help out with costumes.

ACTOR #5. Or move scenery – it's heavy, you know.

ACTOR #1. Or listen – maybe you could even learn a part. Let's hear you say something.

CAMEL. Humph!

ACTOR #3. Besides humph! I mean, this is a high class organization. Were're used to a little more enthusiasm, buster!

CAMEL. *(One more elegant sneer and he's gone.)* HIP, HIP, HUMPH.

ACTOR #1. Ooh, he makes me so mad!

ACTOR #2. *(restrains* **ACTOR #1** *from rushing off and hitting* **CAMEL***)* No, let him go. He's just a howler.

ACTOR #1. But all he does is make fun of everyone else! I'll give him such a smack! *(has to be restrained again)*

ACTOR #3. Oh, he'll get his some day. Him and his "humph."

(They exit. **PARSEE** *enters and takes center stage.)*

"HOW THE RHINOCEROS GOT HIS SKIN"

PARSEE. Once upon a time, on an island on the shores of the Red Sea, there lived a Parsee. Ahem…my humble self. My name is Pestonjee Bomonjee, and from my hat, the rays of the sun are reflected in more than oriental splendor! *(He does a bit with his hat, puts it on, preens a bit.)* And the Parsee – my humble self – lived by the Red Sea with nothing but a hat, a knife, and a cooking stove. I do love to cook! I think I'll bake a cake.

FLOUR AND WATER, CURRANTS AND PLUMS,
SUGAR AND THINGS, MIX IT WITH YOUR THUMBS,
BAKE IT IN THE OVEN,
THEN EAT IT QUICK! OR AS QUICK AS YOU CAN,
CAUSE IT'S TWO FEET ACROSS
AND TWO FEET THICK! JUST THE SIZE FOR A MAN.

Sniff, mmm, a superior comestible. Sniff, sniff, mmm, mmm! It smells *most* sentimental!

(Opens mouth and prepares to eat. He freezes mid-action as the **RHINOCEROS** *snorts his way onto the stage.)*

RHINO. Strorks! Snort, snort.

PARSEE. Why good morning to you, Mr. Rhinoceros.

RHINO. Cake!

PARSEE. Cake? Cake? Where? *(Looks around, then pretends to be surprised to find that he's holding it.)* Oh, you mean this cake! Yes, it certainly is, isn't it? *(sniffs)* I don't think it's much good, though. Stale, don't you know. I really think…

RHINO. CAKE!

PARSEE. Why, Mr. Rhinoceros – if you have cake at this hour, you'll spoil your dinner. How many times has your mother said to you –

RHINO. I'm sooo hungry! *(snort snort)*

PARSEE. But you'll get pimples if you eat too many sweets! Pimples all over your nice smooth skin.

RHINO. It is nice and smooth, isn't it?

PARSEE. Lovely. Really lovely. A beautiful tight fit. No wrinkles anywhere.

RHINO. I know.

(Contemplates himself lovingly for a moment and **PARSEE** *takes advantage by trying to slip away with his cake.* **RHINO** *snaps out of it, catching* **PARSEE** *in mid-sneak.)*

Oh, Parsee, couldn't I have just a little piece?

PARSEE. *(all innocence)* Piece of what?

RHINO. Cake! CAKE!

PARSEE. Well, very well.

PARSEE. *(With extreme reluctance, he breaks off a small piece and hands it to* **RHINO**.*)* There.

RHINO. *(snarfs it up immediately)* Yum. More! More!

PARSEE. But this is my cake! I baked it. It's *mine*!

RHINO. Just one more piece, please?

PARSEE. Oh, all right. But this is it!

(Same business. **PARSEE** *breaks off a small piece,* **RHINO** *gobbles it up.)*

PARSEE. There now. Was that good?

RHINO. *(simply)* Yes. Now I want it *all*!

PARSEE. Oh no! I told you that was it. You've had the *it* one.

RHINO. *(suddenly ferocious)* I want it all!

PARSEE. *(frightened)* But Rhinoceros, remember your complexion, what a nice smooth skin you have!

RHINO. Strorks! *(snort, snort)*

PARSEE. Why Rhinoceros, what little piggy eyes you have!

*(***RHINO** *snorts, licks his chops and moves toward the cake.)*

Why, Rhinoceros, what a big horn you have on your nose!

*(***PARSEE** *runs for the nearest tree and climbs it.* **RHINO** *eats the cake, piggishly, with much smacking and snorting. Then he looks around inside stove to find more, and upsets the stove.)*

(furiously, from the tree) You have no manners, you never did have any manners, and you never will have any manners!

*(***PARSEE** *throws his hat at the* **RHINO** *in a fury.* **RHINO** *dodges, then looks disdainfully at* **PARSEE**.*)*

RHINO. Strorks. *(He waddles over to hat and deliberately steps on it. Then he sashays off.)*

PARSEE. *(Coming down from tree, muttering in unintelligible fury…First he rescues hat, then he picks up stove.)*

Them that takes cakes

Which the Parsee-man bakes

Makes dreadful mistakes.

Five weeks later there was a heat wave at the Red Sea, and everybody took off all the clothes they had and went to the beach for a swim. *(mime walk to beach)* Too darn hot for this hat!

*(***PARSEE** *takes it off, lays it ceremoniously aside, then mimes entering water, splashing himself joyously and swimming away.)*

RHINO. *(entering)* Too darn hot for this skin!

(He takes off "skin" – coat, jacket, or whatever – lays it down carelessly and waddles into the water, snorts, blows bubbles, and swims away. **PARSEE** *re-enters, climbs out of water, shakes himself off. As he reaches for his hat, he notices the skin.)*

PARSEE. Hello, what's this? Somebody down with the heat? I say, old chap, buck up – why – it's just a skin – a nice smooth skin…it looks…it looks just like…

(to audience)

Did you happen to see who left this skin here?

(audience answers)

I knew it! AHA!

(The **PARSEE** *smiles, then laughs, building to maniacal glee. He dances three times round the skin, rubbing his hands, miming actions to the following words.)*

I think I'll just take a quick run back to my camp and see what I can find in my oven…Ah, yes! It's just filled with old, stale, leftover crumbs.

(He gleefully fills his hat with crumbs.)

I love a good crumb cake, don't you? Now, back to the beach! Aha! Still here! Now, Mr. Rude, Mr. No-manners, never-will-have-any-manners, we'll just see!

(miming gestures again)

I'm gonna *take* that skin
And *shake* that skin
And *scrub* that skin
And *rub* that skin
Just full of old, dry, stale, *(wow!)* tickly crumbs!

*(***PARSEE** *makes big production out of scrunching crumbs all over inside of skin. Speaks to an audience member.)*

You wanna help? Come up here!

(Child comes onstage.)

We're gonna TAKE that skin
and SHAKE that skin
and SCRUB that skin
and RUB that skin
Just full of old, dry, stale, tickly crumbs!

Ah! Superior. Superior. Now you go back to your seat and I will climb to the top of this palm tree and we'll all wait for Mr. No-Manners to come put his skin back on.

(He climbs. **RHINO** *enters from the water, snorts prodigiously and shakes himself off. Then he puts his skin back on, looks down with satisfaction at how nice and smooth it is. A beat. He finds a tiny itch. Scratches it. Another. Then another. More and more itches make themselves felt. Finally it itches him like crazy. He addresses audience.)*

RHINO. Who's a good back scratcher? You? Come up here! Can you help me with a little itch on my back? Just scratch, right here. No, higher, higher…to the right… up – no, down, down, ooh, you're not getting it!

*(***RHINO** *flops down, rubbing his back on the sand, rolling and rolling and itching worse and worse.)*

Oooh, it's all over! Worse and worse! *(gets up)* The palm tree has a nice rough bark. I'll try that. *(He runs to tree, rubs against it, pushing his skin into folds.)*

PARSEE. Why Mr. No-Manners, what a lumpy, bumpy, scaliferous skin you have!

*(***RHINO** *stops, looks, bellows in fury, stumps off, snorting and scratching.* **PARSEE** *climbs down.)*

And from that day to this, every rhinoceros has great folds in his skin and a very bad temper, all on account of the cake crumbs inside.

*(***PARSEE** *carefully cleans out the inside of his hat, puts it on, smiles hugely at audience.)*

Them that takes cakes
Which the Parsee man bakes
Makes dreadful mistakes!

"THE BEGINNING OF ARMADILLOS"

MOTHER. *(to audience, very graciously)* Hello there, darlings, hello. You may not know it, but I am a jaguar, one of the fastest, and of course most beautiful, of the big jungle cats. But enough about me. A mother doesn't need the spotlight. I really want you to meet my little girl. Doffles, come here!

DOFFLES. *(bounds in)* Here I am, Ma!

MOTHER. Ah, yes, dear. Now, I want you to show all these lovely people how clever you are! Let's do our latest lesson for them.

DOFFLES. *(embarrassed)* Oh, Ma!

MOTHER. Come now dear. Ready? Now. When you find a stickly-prickly porcupine…

*(***PORCUPINE** *enters, signifies to audience that that's him.)*

DOFFLES. When you find a porky-pine…

MOTHER. You must…you must… *(She mimes to help daughter get the answer.)*

DOFFLES. Drop him in the water and then he will…

*(***MOTHER** *mimes uncoiling.)*

Uncoil!

*(***PORCUPINE** *looks horrified.)*

MOTHER. Right darling! And when you catch a slow-solid tortoise…

*(***TORTOISE** *enters in time to catch his own name and identify himself to audience.)*

DOFFLES. When I catch a tortoise?

MOTHER. You remember, darling, when you catch a tortoise… *(She mimes action of scooping to prompt her again.)*

DOFFLES. You must scoop him out of his shell with your paw.

*(***TORTOISE** *looks horrified.)*

MOTHER. Splendid darling! *(to audience)* Isn't she the cleverest little thing? Now, Doffles, Mother is going to leave you on your own to see how well you can do. I'll be back. Now, be a good little jaguar and remember your lessons. *(to audience)* Isn't she precious? *(She exits.)*

DOFFLES. Ha! On my own at last! I'm the toughest little jaguar in this whole jungle! And I'm fast!

(She spots the **PORCUPINE** *and* **TORTOISE***, who are slowly trying to creep away.)*

I'm real fast!

(She pounces and lands before them, cutting off their exit.)

Ha! Caught you both! Now come here!

(She drags them both center, one on either side. They both assume defensive positions, the **PORCUPINE** *curled into a ball and the* **TORTOISE** *withdrawn into his shell.)*

Ha! I've caught a Porky-pine! And a Tortoise! Or is it a Tortoise and a Porky-pine? Now which is which?

(She taps them both sharply on the back.)

Now listen here, fellows. This is very important! My mother said that when I meet a Porkypine I am to drop him into the water to make him uncoil, and when I meet a Tortoise I am to scoop him out of his shell with my paw. Now which one is Porkypine and which one is Tortoise? Because, to save my spots, I can't tell!

PORCUPINE. Are you sure of what your Mommy told you? Are you quite sure? Perhaps she said that when you uncoil a Tortoise you must shell him out of the water with a scoop and when you paw a Porcupine you must drop him on the shell!

TORTOISE. Or maybe she said that when you water a Porcupine you must drop him into your paw and when you meet a Tortoise you must shell him until he uncoils!

DOFFLES. Now, wait a minute –

PORCUPINE. When you scoop water with your paw you uncoil it with a Porcupine. Remember that because it's important!

TORTOISE. But, when you paw your meat, you must drop it into a Tortoise with a scoop. Why can't you understand?

DOFFLES. Stop, stop! I don't want your advice! I only want to know which of you is Porky-pine and which one is Tortoise!

PORCUPINE. I won't tell you. But you can scoop me out of my shell if you like.

DOFFLES. Aha! Now I know you're the Tortoise! You thought I wouldn't! Now I will.

*(***DOFFLES** *swipes with her paw just as* **PORCUPINE** *curls into a ball. She gets a pawful of prickles. And the* **PORCUPINE** *rolls offstage.)*

DOFFLES. *(cont.)* Ow! Prickles! Ow! Owowowowow!

(She dances about, shaking her paw, puts it into her mouth, hurts her mouth, yells again. Finally calms down.)

Why, he wasn't a Tortoise at all! But how do I know that this other one is Tortoise?

TORTOISE. But I am Tortoise! Your mother was quite right. She said that you were to scoop me out of my shell with your paw. Begin.

DOFFLES. You didn't say that a minute ago. You said something different.

TORTOISE. Well, just because you say that I said that she said something different, what difference does that make? Because if she said what you said I said she said, it's just the same as if I said what she said she said. On

the other hand, if you think she said to uncoil me with a scoop, and not to paw me into drops with a shell, it isn't my fault!

DOFFLES. I don't believe you. You've mixed up all the things my mother said with all the things you asked me if I was sure she didn't say and I'm so confused! Now let me think. Hmmm. My mother told me that I was to drop one of you in the water. And you seem so anxious to be uncoiled that I think you really don't want to be dropped! Ok…you jump into that water.

TORTOISE. All right, but when your mother doesn't like it, don't blame me! *(***TORTOISE** *jumps in water and swims away.)*

DOFFLES. *(Looks after* **TORTOISE** *in disbelief. Looks in direction of* **PORCUPINE**. *Sucks her paw.)* Ma? Ma?! MAAA!

MOTHER. *(entering)* Darling, darling! What have you been doing that you shouldn't have done?

DOFFLES. I tried to scoop out something that said it wanted to be scooped out of its shell with my paw and my paw is full of per-ickles!

MOTHER. Darling. That must have been a Porcupine! You should have dropped him in the water.

DOFFLES. I did that to the other thing, and he said he was a Tortoise and I didn't believe him and it was quite true and he dived in and swam away and I haven't had anything to eat all day-ay-ay! *(Ends on a wail.)*

MOTHER. Darling. Now listen and remember what I say:

*(***PORCUPINE** *and* **TORTOISE** *enter and listen, unseen.)*

A Porcupine curls himself into a ball and his prickles stick out every which way at once. By this you may know the Porcupine.

*(***TORTOISE** *joins* **PORCUPINE**.*)*

PORCUPINE. I don't like this old lady one bit. I wonder what else she knows?

MOTHER. A Tortoise can't curl himself up. He only draws his head and legs into his shell. By this you may know the Tortoise.

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