Arabian Nights
by David Ives
CHARACTERS

INTERPRETER: Wears loose colorful robes and sandals. May be played by a woman wearing a dark beard.

FLORA: Very ordinary.

NORMAN: Utterly normal. Carries a suitcase.

TIME AND PLACE

Flora’s shop. The present.

Arabian Nights

Up right, a freestanding open doorway with a multicolored bead curtain. Center, a small, plain wooden table with a white cloth. On it: A frame, a stone, a gold ring, and a figure of a frog.

At lights up, Flora is at the table, dusting the objects with a feather duster. Through the bead curtain comes the Interpreter, leading in Norman, who carries a suitcase.

INTERPRETER: Right this way, sir, this way. The most beautiful shop in the world. All the wonders of the kingdom. For nothing! Nothing! I will interpret for you.

NORMAN: (To Flora.) Hello.

INTERPRETER: Hall, fair maid! says he.

FLORA: (To Norman, putting the feather duster away.) Good morning.

INTERPRETER: All praise to the highest, says she.

NORMAN: Do you... speak any English?

INTERPRETER: Do you... speak any English?

FLORA: (She speaks perfect, unaccented English.) Yes, I speak some English.

INTERPRETER: Indeed, sir, I can stammer out a broken song of pitiful, insufficient words.

NORMAN: Ah-ha.

INTERPRETER: Ah-ha.

NORMAN: Well...

INTERPRETER: A deep hole in the ground.

NORMAN: I...

INTERPRETER: (Points to his eye.) The organ of vision.

NORMAN: Ummm...

INTERPRETER: Ummm...

NORMAN: Listen.

INTERPRETER: Do you hear something?

(Interpreter and Flora listen for something.)

NORMAN: I’m sorry to rush in so late like this.
FLORA: No, please.
INTERPRETER: No, please.
NORMAN: But you see...
INTERPRETER: (Points to his butt.) But— (Points to Flora.) —you— (Does binocu-
lars with his hands.) —see...
NORMAN: (Looks at his watch.) Darn...
INTERPRETER: (Produces an hourglass from among his robes.) How swiftly flow
the sands of time!
NORMAN: I know this sounds crazy—
INTERPRETER: I know this sounds crazy—
NORMAN: I only have about ten minutes.
INTERPRETER: Soon the golden orb of heaven will cleave the house of the
hedgehog.
NORMAN: I have to catch a plane.
INTERPRETER: I must clamber upon the flying corporate carpet and flap away
from your kingdom.
NORMAN: Anyway, I want to find...
INTERPRETER: Anyway, I want to find...
FLORA: Yes?
INTERPRETER: Yes?
NORMAN: I guess you’d call it...
INTERPRETER: Something unparalleled! Something sublime!
NORMAN: A souvenir.
INTERPRETER: (You’re kidding.) A souvenir...?!
NORMAN: Something to take with me.
INTERPRETER: A treasure!
FLORA: Any particular kind of thing?
INTERPRETER: Can the funicular hide the spring?
NORMAN: Excuse me?
INTERPRETER: Accuse me?
FLORA: How much did you want to spend?
INTERPRETER: How much did you want to spend?
NORMAN: It doesn’t matter.
INTERPRETER: Let’s haggle. I’m loaded!
FLORA: Is this for yourself?
INTERPRETER: Have you a mistress, a wife, a harem?
NORMAN: No, this is for me.
INTERPRETER: Alas, a lad alone in all the world am I.

FLORA: Well...
INTERPRETER: A deep hole in the ground.
FLORA: I think I can help you.
INTERPRETER: Solitary sir, the maiden says, I look in your eyes and I see your
soul shining there like a golden carp in an azure pool.
NORMAN: Really...?
INTERPRETER: Really. Now, in this brief moment, in the midst of this mirage
called life, here on this tiny square of soil on the whirling earth, I feel the
two of us joined by a crystal thread, your soul to my soul to yours.
NORMAN: You do?
INTERPRETER: You do?
FLORA: I do.
INTERPRETER: She does.
NORMAN: You know, I’ve been up and down this street every day...
INTERPRETER: Day and night I have walked the bazaar...
NORMAN: I sure wish I’d seen this place sooner.
INTERPRETER: Only so that I might see you.
FLORA: I’ve noticed you walking by.
INTERPRETER: How I pined for you to enter as you passed.
NORMAN: You did?
INTERPRETER: She did. She asks your name.
NORMAN: My name is Norman.
INTERPRETER: My name is Sinbad!
NORMAN: I’m here on some business.
INTERPRETER: I am the merchant son of a great prince, exiled from my land.
FLORA: Is that so.
INTERPRETER: Her name is Izzatasso.
FLORA: People call me Flora.
INTERPRETER: But people call me Flora.
FLORA: With an F.
INTERPRETER: With an F.
NORMAN: I...
INTERPRETER: The organ of vision.
NORMAN: (Looks at watch.) Darn it.
INTERPRETER: (Produces hourglass.) Darn it...
NORMAN: Y’know, Flora...
INTERPRETER: Y’know, Flora...
NORMAN: You shop and you shop...
INTERPRETER: We live our brief lives...
NORMAN: ...you never seem to find that special thing you're shopping for.
INTERPRETER: ...each day awaiting the dawn that will give us purpose, bring us happiness.
FLORA: That's so true.
INTERPRETER: That's so true.
NORMAN: Maybe what I'm looking for is right here.
INTERPRETER: Perhaps my dawn has come.
FLORA: Shhh!
INTERPRETER: Shhh!
FLORA: I thought I heard my father.
INTERPRETER: My father may be listening!
FLORA: It's almost time for his tea.
INTERPRETER: If he sees me talking to you, he'll cut your throat!
NORMAN AND INTERPRETER: (Simultaneous—as they pick up the suitcase together.)
Maybe I should be going...
FLORA: No—
INTERPRETER: No—
FLORA: He won't bother us.
INTERPRETER: Have mercy, good sir!
NORMAN: (Hesitantly.) I do have a plane to catch.
INTERPRETER: Take my suitcase.
(Flora takes the suitcase from him and sets it down.)
FLORA: There's plenty of time.
INTERPRETER: Keep your voice low.
FLORA: Shhh!
INTERPRETER: Shhh!
FLORA: I thought I heard him calling.
INTERPRETER: He's sharpening the blade.
(We hear the sound of a blade being sharpened.)
NORMAN: (Cry of surprise.)
INTERPRETER: (Cry of surprise.)
FLORA: He's watching old movies.
INTERPRETER: The old man is mad.
FLORA: Anyway, I'm sure I'll have something you'll like.
INTERPRETER: Act as if you're buying something.
NORMAN: What about these things right here?
INTERPRETER: What about these things right here?

FLORA: Maybe a picture frame?
INTERPRETER: Can you conceive, prince, how lonely my life is? It is as empty as this frame.
FLORA: Or a stone?
INTERPRETER: It is as hard—and as cheap—as this stone.
FLORA: (Gestures left.) I have more in the back.
INTERPRETER: (Gestures left.) He keeps me locked in a tiny cell.
NORMAN: No. No.
INTERPRETER: Stay with me.
FLORA: Maybe...
INTERPRETER: What I long for...
FLORA: ...a golden ring?
INTERPRETER: ...is love. Golden love.
FLORA: If not a ring, maybe a figurine?
INTERPRETER: But my father has betrothed me to a man as ugly as this frog.
FLORA: Interested?
INTERPRETER: Would you marry this?
NORMAN: Not really.
INTERPRETER: Not really.
FLORA: I don't know what else I can show you.
INTERPRETER: I have nothing, sir. Nothing! Nichts! Neins! Niente! Rien! Zip zero nada zilch! Bupkis!
NORMAN: My God, you're beautiful.
INTERPRETER: My God, you're beautiful.
FLORA: Excuse me?
INTERPRETER: Excuse me?
NORMAN: I'm sorry.
INTERPRETER: I'm sorry.
NORMAN: I don't usually say things like that.
INTERPRETER: I know I sound like a jerk.
NORMAN: Sometimes it's something so simple.
INTERPRETER: So complicated are the ways of kismet.
NORMAN: You walk into a shop...
INTERPRETER: I look at you...
NORMAN: ...and everything's suddenly different, somehow.
INTERPRETER: ...and my heart flutters inside me like a leaf of the perfumed gum tree at the scented bounce of bedspring.
FLORA: Really?
INTERPRETER: Really.
NORMAN: Now in this brief moment...
INTERPRETER: Now in this brief moment...
NORMAN: On this tiny patch of ground on the whirling earth...
INTERPRETER: In the midst of this mirage called life...
NORMAN: I feel us joined by a crystal thread, your soul to my soul to yours.
INTERPRETER: Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.
FLORA: You do?
INTERPRETER: You do?
NORMAN: I...
INTERPRETER: The organ of vision.
NORMAN: ...do.
INTERPRETER: He does.
NORMAN: How can I leave, now that I've seen you, met you, heard you?
INTERPRETER: How can I get on a plane?
NORMAN: Now that fate has brought me to this bazaar?
INTERPRETER: It's so bizarre. But fate has decreed that we must part.
NORMAN: (Takes out an hourglass.) Oh cruel fate! How swiftly flow the sands
of time!
INTERPRETER: (Looks at a watch.) Shit...!
NORMAN: The stars have decreed we must part.
INTERPRETER: Look, I really gotta go.
NORMAN: (Kisses Flora's hand.) But I will return, O my florid queen!
INTERPRETER: Maybe I'll pass this way again sometime.
FLORA: I will wait for you, my Norman prince!
NORMAN: Izhatso.
FLORA: It is so! I will be yours and you will be mine and we will be...
INTERPRETER: ...each other's.
NORMAN: ...each other's.
FLORA: ...each other's.
INTERPRETER: Maybe I'll have something you like.
NORMAN: Well...
INTERPRETER: A deep hole in the ground.
FLORA: Well...
INTERPRETER: With purest water at the bottom.
NORMAN: Salaam!
INTERPRETER: So long!
FLORA: Salaam!