

PLAYS FOR  
**New Audiences**

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

***Sinbad: The Untold  
Tale***

by Charles Way

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**Principle Characters**

Sinbad, the sailor.

Sinbad, the porter.

Ittifaq.

Jan Shah.

The silent genie.

The genie, Abu Nuwas.

**Other roles**

The Merchant, Fadl ibn Rabi.

Thieves.

Street Women.

Soldiers.

Dancers,

Skeleton warriors.

A young man.

A king.

The play can be performed by a cast of six: 2 female, 4 male.

Sinbad                      Welcome to my house. I am your host and my name is Sinbad- the voyager. Of course you have heard my name before, who in the wide world has not heard of my adventures, how I flew in the claws of a giant bird, how I fought the old man of the sea. How I landed my boat on the back of a fish the size of an island. Seven times I set sail, seven times I returned, wiser – richer – older, always older for no one can be young forever and all journeys must end be they happy or sad, and the wheel of fate must turn as each day turns one into another.

Now I sit in my garden a venerable old man with a silver beard and listen to the birds sing hymns to Allah, as I do in my heart for it is only through his will that I survived to tell my tales to all who visit my house. But there is one tale, I have not told, so fresh it is like a new loaf, fragrant but yet to be tasted. So recent are its marvelous events that I barely know where to begin- but it must be told here tonight for the first time before memory fades or belief begins to question the strange occurrences that I will set before your eyes and ears. It was only three weeks ago that I heard the call to morning prayers and rose from my sleep to greet the day...

*We hear the call to morning prayer.*

The great city stirred in the rising sun from its slumber. Baghdad, metropolis of the world, garden of the universe, meeting place of nations, anthill of peoples, city of peace, whose great thirst is quenched by the mighty river Euphrates. Twenty one days ago a small boat arrived at its banks and the merchant Fadl ibn Rabi, called out-

Merchant                      Porter. Porter.

Sinbad                         Yes Master.

Merchant                      Take this box to the house of Sinbad.

Sinbad                         Sinbad?

Merchant                      You know, the sailor Sinbad, the old fool who never stops going on about his ridiculous journeys. You know where he lives?

Sinbad                      Of course master.

Merchant                  Don't use that insolent tone with me. Now, guard this box with your life.

Sinbad                      Why? What's in it?

Merchant                  That is not your business- but it has come all the way from, Samaraquand so don't lose it now, and remember you don't get paid a single dinar until I hear from Sinbad himself that the box arrived safely.

Sinbad                      Don't worry sir, I'm the best Porter in Baghdad.

Merchant                  So says every Porter.

Sinbad                      I am the only one who tells the truth.

Merchant                  So says every porter.

*The Streets of Baghdad. Enter Thieves.*

Thief 1                      Hey you stop. Hey you I said stop. Don't you know I'm talking to you dung-face.

Sinbad                      No, no excellent one eyed one-you simply said, 'Hey you.' If you had said, 'Hey you 'dung face" I would have looked in your direction immediately.

*The others laugh.*

Thief 1                      Hey?

Sinbad                      But I'm so glad you have stopped and-and surrounded me- because I have heard these streets are full of stupid cowardly thieves.

Thieves                      Why you little...

Sinbad But I have also heard of one gang who are extremely cunning and brave. Is that you?

Thief 1 Of course-

Sinbad And are you going to rob me of this box?

Thief 1 Of course.

Sinbad Oh -praise be-that I have met the brave cunning thieves, please rob me, rob me.

Thieves Hey?

Thief 2 You want us to rob you?

Sinbad Of course-you would be saving my life-although you would not be robbing me as such-for I am only the poor porter who carries the box you would be stealing from the snake man of-of Smaraqand.

Thief 1 The snake man of Samarqand?

Sinbad Oh yes-he takes the venom from the deadly snakes I carry in this box to make the poison politicians use to get rid of other politicians. But it is my unfortunate duty, not only to carry the box but to be the first to open it because my life is worth nothing. I have no parents no brothers or sisters and who cares if a lonely urchin like me dies a slow painful venomous horrible dark deadly death.

Thief 2 Words fall from your mouth like dung from a camel's backside.

Sinbad Thank you.

Thief 1 Snakes you say?

Sinbad And so I beg you excellent one eyed over weight one-please rob me - rob me- rob me.

Thief 1                    Stop that-stop that. Unfortunately for you I am more cunning than brave. That's why I have forty thieves at my command. They all obey me.

Thief 3                    Even from their prison cells. Where they are-at the moment.

Thief 1                    Be gone, porter of snakes.

Sinbad                    No, no, rob me, rob me.

Thief 1                    Stop that! Be on your way. You, you pest without a family, even god has deserted you and I shall do the same.

*Thieves turn into women.*

Sinbad                    Thank you.

Woman 1                  Hello young man.

Sinbad                    I'm afraid I can't stop---beautiful young woman with kohl round her eyes.

Woman 1                  What is that box your carrying?

Sinbad                    Oh this-square old thing?

Woman 1                  What would you say if I were to give you a kiss in exchange for that box?

Sinbad                    I would say that it would not be a fair exchange. One kiss from you would be worth far more than this poor old box. I could not cheat someone so lovely-farewell.

Woman 1                  I accept your terms. [*He is spun round and she given a kiss- by an old woman.*] There our business is done-now give me the box.

Sinbad                    Oh but I did not ask for a kiss.

Woman 2                  Your eyes asked for a thousand.

Sinbad                    My eyes?

Woman 2                Your eyes spoke volumes.

Woman 1                Your eyes are a library of desires.

Sinbad                    And I can't even read.

Woman1                 Now give me the box- before I tell my brothers that you have stolen my honor.

Sinbad                    But worthy sister it is for your honor and your beauty that I urge you not to take this box for it belongs to my master-the mirage maker, of Masabadahan.

Woman 1                The mirage maker of Masabadahan?

Sinbad                    Inside this box is a mirror- but it is no ordinary mirror for it reflects our natures not our faces.

Woman 2                Do not listen to him sister.

Sinbad                    I beg you to listen- for the last woman to gaze in the mirror had the face of an elephant- with a nose- like so -but she had a pure soul and the mirror saw it and changed her face and now she is a great beauty but the mirror will also do the opposite, and anyone who is not so – so pure – should beware.

Woman 1                What are you saying you vile demon-that I'm not good at heart?

Sinbad                    No no - I'm simply saying that you should not tempt fate - for only you will know what the mirror will see - and, and, and it would be hard to sell kisses if one had the face of an elephant-with a nose-like so.

Woman 2                Words fall from your mouth like dung from a camel's backside.

Sinbad                    So I've heard.

Woman 1            Bah-take your skinny shoulders, your box and your mirror and leave my street.

Sinbad             I will. And, thank you for the kiss.

*The women turn into soldiers.*

Soldier 1           Stop there!

Soldier 2           Where do you think you're going in such a hurry?

Sinbad I am a porter on private business.

Soldier 1           And we are soldiers of the Caliph on public business.

Soldier 2           And anyone who passes by us- must give us something. In your case - it's that box. Hand it over.

Sinbad             This box?

Soldier 1           Yes-lets call it-a tax

Soldier 2           You know what a tax is?

Sinbad             Oh yes-good soldier, a tax is the best means of defense. [He yells in their faces] You despicable disloyal creatures you have failed. You have failed the test the glorious Caliph has set you. Praise be to Harun Al Rashid.

Soldiers            Hey?

Sinbad             Porter, he says, run through the streets of Baghdad with this box and test the loyalty of my guards. If any one of them dare steal from you in my name they shall suffer the same fate of the, the, the, traitor of Tabaristan who's head is in this box. Oh why, why, could you not be loyal? Traitors, traitors. [*Soldiers fall to their knees*] Fetch me some executioners with boxes boxes-for the heads of these traitors. Traitors and boxes - boxes and traitors.

Soldiers            No No- we did not mean  
We only meant



To not mean  
What we meant  
Which is not what we meant  
At all.

Sinbad                   Hah! Words fall from your mouths like dung from a camel's  
backside.

Soldiers                How may we redeem ourselves?

Sinbad                   The only way to keep your own heads is to escort me safely  
through the streets of Baghdad to the house of Sinbad the sailor -for  
his house has the highest walls in Baghdad and there the  
tongueless eyeless earless headless head of the traitor of of-of

Soldiers                Tabaristan.

Sinbad                   Yes. Shall be displayed as a warning to all the city.

Soldiers                But we cannot leave our posts.

Sinbad                   Then bring them with you- on the double.

*Exit Sinbad the Porter and The soldiers with their posts.*

### **The Courtyard of Sinbad the Sailor.**

*The courtyard is now fully displayed with lovely draped cloths-soft music plays and incense is  
burning. Enter Ittifaq, with a sword. She practices not knowing that her Father is present. Her  
movements are skilful, precise but aggressive. She sees her Father.*

Ittifaq                   Father?

Sinbad S                What's the matter Ittifaq? You attack the air as if it were your  
mortal enemy.

Ittifaq                   You know very well, what 'the matter' is.

Sinbad S                How impatient you've become.

Ittifaq I don't mean to be- I just-. But how can I expect you to understand.

Sinbad S Ittifaq, I promised you, and I will keep my promise, on your fourteenth birthday I will tell you everything you wish to know about your past, by which time I have judged you will be mature enough to understand all that has happened.

Ittifaq But-I will be fourteen in three weeks. Will I be more mature in three weeks than now? Can't you see how ridiculous it is?

Sinbad S You will accept my decision! Where would the world be if we just went about changing birthdays as if they meant nothing? [*He turns to leave*]

Ittifaq Do you think she's still alive?

Sinbad S Who?

Ittifaq My mother-who else could I mean?

Sinbad S On your fourteenth birthday. [*He turns to leave*]

Ittifaq I think she's alive, somewhere, and one day I shall see her, won't I?

Sinbad S Who knows what Allah has in store for us. Perhaps to take your mind of such things-you will allow me to tell you a story. My fifth adventure was very gory-

Ittifaq I've heard it father- a thousand and one times.

Sinbad S Be patient daughter. [*Exit*]

Ittifaq Patient! [*She slices the air again with her sword and this is how Sinbad the porter finds her who now enters. He bows and suddenly she sees him and feels foolish.*] Yes? What is it?

Sinbad I am here to see Sinbad-the voyager. I have a parcel for him from the merchant, Fadl ibn Rabi.

Ittifaq                    Give it to me.

Sinbad                    With respect good, youthful, lady, I cannot and beg your forgiveness.

Ittifaq                    It's alright, I'm his daughter.

Sinbad                    And I am his porter, and must place this box into his own hands or my life will not be worth living.

Ittifaq                    That is probably true in any case. Give me the box.

Sinbad                    My life-you understand.

Ittifaq                    I think an urchin like you is more worried about his pay than his life. Leave the box here and wait by the main gate. I will send a servant with money to you. Well go.

Sinbad                    With even more respect fair lady of the house, I must fulfill my duty and receive a note from Sinbad saying that I've done so.

Ittifaq                    Now you begin to irritate me. This is a respectable household, and we always pay what we owe. Do you suggest otherwise?

Sinbad                    No.

Ittifaq                    Then do as I tell you.

Sinbad                    With greater and greater respect, for you and your house and all your ancestors, and their relatives, I cannot.

Ittifaq                    Respect? You have no more respect in you than a starving dog has for a corpse. Now go. *[Enter Sinbad S.]*

Sinbad S                    What is all this shouting Ittifaq?

Ittifaq                    It's nothing Father, just a rascal from the back streets causing a nuisance.

Sinbad S                   What is your business here?

Sinbad                    I am a porter who has brought you this box from Samarqand. Into your hands alone must it be delivered, the hands of the mighty voyager Sinbad, whose fame is known throughout the world.

Sinbad S                   *[Studies the box carefully]* Ittifaq, fetch this boy a drink. Oh, do not call a servant, bring it yourself.

Ittifaq                    Father?

Sinbad S                   Please, honor me and obey my simple request. *[Ittifaq obeys.]* You seem tired young man.

Sinbad                    The journey to your door was short, but very long.

Sinbad S                   Yes, a mile through the streets of Baghdad can be more dangerous than a thousand through open desert. And still it's wonderful city, we live in a time of plenty. Praise be to Harun Al Rashid. *[Sinbad the porter bows]* If only the Good Caliph were here more often to protect us. What do you think Porter?

Sinbad                    I do not think about such matters but I'm sure that wherever the Caliph wishes to be it is also the wish of Allah.

Sinbad S                   How politic. One day you will be king of the back streets-perhaps you already are. Here is a note for the merchant. *[Enter Ittifaq. She places the water some distance from Sinbad the porter.]* Please. Give the thirsty lad his drink. *[She does so. He drinks]*

Ittifaq                    And now you may go.

Sinbad S                   Wait. What is your name?

Sinbad                    My name? Oh it is-it is- something and nothing.

Sinbad S                   Yes? Tell us or aren't you proud of your name?

Sinbad                    I am as proud of my name as you are of yours.

Sinbad S                    Then say it.

Sinbad                      My name is Sinbad.

Sinbad S                    What? You also? Ha ha-Sinbad the Porter.

Ittifaq                      He lies Father to ingratiate himself to you and get more money.

Sinbad                      My name is Sinbad, and that name I have carried in my mouth since my parents turned to dust on my fourth birthday. It is the only thing they left me and I would not pour scorn on it if I were you.

Ittifaq                      How dare you raise your voice to me, in my own house.

Sinbad S                    Ittifaq!

Ittifaq                      This boy has done nothing but make fun of us father. You cannot see it but his eyes are insolent, and I would not trust him to sit so near, he will steal the slippers from your feet if he has the chance.

Sinbad S                    Perhaps, but then in my long life I have been an occasional thief myself. Do you know 'Sinbad' I was once alone in a strange land with nothing to eat and I had to steal from an old woman- she had two heads- and so two mouths-

Ittifaq                      Father?

Sinbad S                    What is it daughter?

Ittifaq                      I beg you, for my honor.

Sinbad S                    I am only going to tell him a short story. You will sit by me and listen also even though you have heard it many times, I know. Please sit Ittifaq. My voyages have made me rich and that wealth I give to you alone. My stories however, I share with everyone. Now sit. *[She storms out]* My daughter-so like myself. Please- eat. You aren't hungry?

Sinbad                      Yes.

Sinbad S                    These figs I grew myself. No? Surely you must know it is rude to refuse my hospitality.

Sinbad                      Perhaps it is also rude to offer something to someone you know cannot return the favor.

Sinbad S                    [He stands offended] No-I will not let you offend me. Sinbad the porter you have more pride on your bones than flesh-and I suppose therefore you have survived the wrath of many people. I too am a survivor. Please eat.

Sinbad                      But why sir? I am no one- a porter. What do you want of me?

Sinbad S                    A little trust perhaps, and a little time to think, because you are a porter who carries my name- and you carried this box and this box contains items of, great value. Items which I made a gift of to someone, long ago-which they now return. I need time to dwell on these things and discover what they mean.

Sinbad                      Perhaps-there is no meaning. Why should there be?

Sinbad S                    Ah. I can see the streets have made you a philosopher. Either there is meaning in everything- that happens and exists- or there is none at all. Which do you believe Sinbad-the porter? [*Enter Ittifaq.*]

Ittifaq                      Father?

Sinbad S                    What is it Ittifaq?

Ittifaq                      There is something happening in the city. People are running and shouting.

Sinbad S                    I can hear- but from what do they run? Be my eyes child-

Sinbad                      Your eyes? You are? I mean, are you --?

Sinbad S                    Blind? Yes Porter, almost. I who have seen so much- what meaning is there in that do you think?

Sinbad But you do not seem so.

Sinbad S Who is blind in his own home? I know every step and corner. Here I can see better than you. Ittifaq?

Ittifaq There is a great cloud approaching the city from the west.

Sinbad S A thunderstorm?

Ittifaq No Father, it is- very strange.

Sinbad S Locusts?

Sinbad No.

Sinbad S Then it must be sand.

Ittifaq & Sinbad No.

Sinbad It has no color I have ever seen.

Ittifaq It is not a natural thing. [Strange sound]

Sinbad S What's happening?

Ittifaq It has reached the edge of the city-is entering the streets. [*Lights fade*]

Sinbad S And blocks the sun. There is someone-something approaching the house. I can feel it in my bones. Porter-do not run from here.

Ittifaq Let him run Father. That's his instinct.

Sinbad What is that noise?

Sinbad S Sinbad the porter- take my daughter to one side and keep her hidden.

Sinbad Me?

Ittifaq                    Him?

Sinbad S                Do as I command-both of you. *[A dark smoke starts to enter and the sound gets louder it is high pitched and unbearable.]*

Ittifaq                    Father?

Sinbad S                Go Ittifaq. Go.

Sinbad                    Come with me.

Ittifaq                    I will stay with my father.

Sinbad S                No no-you will obey your father and -and hide.

*They hide and watch the following scene. Slowly the mist clears and the sound dies down. A very old woman is now standing in the courtyard.*

Jan Shah                Good evening, Sinbad the voyager.

Sinbad S                Who are you?

Jan Shah                What a wonderful home you have. How many times on your lonely travels must you have dreamt of such a place.

Sinbad S                Yes-but I don't remember inviting you into it. Have you no respect for the customs of this land?

Jan Shah                None at all I'm afraid.

Sinbad S                Then you're not welcome. Leave my house and take whatever foul mist you have brought with you and return to that dark and lonely place I sense you have come from.

Jan Shah                Oh you refer to the 'cloud' that hangs over the city, the people seem quite frightened of it, as well they might, even as we speak-they fall into a coughing fit-that is by all accounts-most painful. Of course it does not affect the children- the young are very special- and are after all the future, don't you agree.



Sinbad S                   Who are you? What is your purpose?

Jan Shah                   My name is Jan Shah. Why do you blanch Sinbad? Have you heard of me?

Sinbad S                   I once heard-on my travels- of a sorceress called Jan Shah.

Jan Shah                   How nice-I'm glad my name is familiar to you. It makes life a little more bearable in old age to be renowned for something. Vanity is so tenacious. You of course would understand.

Sinbad S                   What do you want?

Jan Shah                   The cloud that hangs above your head contains a deadly sickness, every adult who breathes in its vapors will die within twenty one days.

Ittifaq                     Father?

Sinbad                     Stay put. [*Jan Shah turns sensing their presence.*]

Sinbad S                   Why-why do you do this?

Jan Shah                   There is- a cure-for this sickness. It is contained within a single flower that has more petals than stars. It is a small flower and grows from a crack in a rock in a cave far beneath the sea. Only the essence of this flower can dispel the cloud that hangs above the city. You Sinbad-will go on one last journey and fetch this flower, and bring it back to Baghdad.

Sinbad S                   You have not told me why-or what you want.

Jan Shah                   That is not your concern. Your concern is to save the city-you profess to love.

Sinbad S                   But I am an old man.

Jan Shah                   Yes-what a curse it is. I too am old Sinbad. See my hands- my face. Once upon a time, my beauty would have startled you and you would have fallen at my feet.

Sinbad S I cannot see your face or anyone's face. My voyages are over. You know I cannot do what you ask.

Jan Shah Then I will assist you- guide you. There is a boat that waits on the banks of the river-it is ready to sail and knows its course.

Sinbad S I beg you-on my knees.

Jan Shah You are wasting time Sinbad- and time is something you don't have, any more than I-it is always slipping through our fingers like the desert sand. If you do not bring back the flower within twenty one days Baghdad will be a city of orphans. If you love the people Sinbad- bring back the flower. *[Exit Jan Shah.]*

Ittifaq Father?

Sinbad S My lungs?

Ittifaq Are you sick?

Sinbad S Yes- but you are not.

Sinbad What does that mean?

Ittifaq It means she's telling the truth.

Sinbad Don't be ridiculous. Sir- I have seen this kind of trickery before. It's a simple blackmail-soon you will receive a letter asking for money. Pay it and the cloud will vanish-it's not a plague-it's a trick.

Ittifaq A trick? That woman came out of nowhere. As if she were made of mist herself.

Sinbad An easy kind of magic, I have seen a child disappear up a rope into cloud of smoke-It's an illusion, - that's all.

Sinbad S You do not know everything Porter. This magic is of a different kind and I must go and find this flower.

Ittifaq                    You know you cannot go.

Sinbad                    Why would she ask you to go and then make you sick? It doesn't make sense.

Ittifaq                    Someone should ride and tell the Caliph.

Sinbad S                    There's no time. The Caliph is more than twenty-one days from here. Ittifaq, take me to the river- *[He falls in coughing fit]*

Ittifaq                    Father? What is it? Why do you weep?

Sinbad S                    Because I'm old and helpless. If I had your youth-your eyes then I'd take my sword and cut off that witches head.

Ittifaq                    Calm yourself father.

Sinbad S                    Twenty one days? *[He grabs Sinbad the porter]*

Sinbad                    What is it-why do you stare?

Sinbad S                    It's you. That's why you came today- that's why you're here- carrying my name-by the grace of Allah- you will be the one to save the city.

Ittifaq                    Him?

Sinbad                    Me? I'm a porter. I carry things.

Sinbad S                    Yes-And you 'porter' will find the flower and carry it back.

Sinbad                    Me?

Ittifaq                    Him? Father you can't send a porter on such a mission- it, it—

Sinbad                    It isn't fair.

Ittifaq                    And if you could see him-he is so skinny.

Sinbad                    Thin as a tooth pick.

Sinbad S                    Nevertheless you are the one. You will go.

Sinbad                      No, no, no, no, no, no . He's confused. I am Sinbad the skinny porter you are Sinbad the sailor-with the muscles and the big sword. He's confused.

Ittifaq                      Father- your mind is unclear. Surely you can see that I, Ittifaq the daughter of Sinbad should go. Why else did you tell me your all your stories, night after night? Why else did you teach me how to think for myself, how to wield a sword. I will bring the flower back.

Sinbad S                    You, Ittifaq will stay here. I command you, as you are my daughter- *[He falls again into a coughing fit]*

Ittifaq                      You would send a porter in my place?

Sinbad S                    The box. Fetch me the box. Ittifaq-do as I say! Boy- come here. Take this box with you.

Sinbad                      But I'm not going anywhere.

Sinbad S                    Take it and strap it to your back. Inside the box are three items, none are what they seem to be. When you have need of them, and are in mortal danger they will know it, and come to you. Because they are a gift to you, only you will make them become-- Are you listening?

Sinbad                      No. I am not capable of a journey such as this.

Sinbad S                    You are too young to know what you're capable of. Sinbad- bring back the flower and save the city and I will make you rich beyond your wildest dreams.

Sinbad                      There isn't that much money in the world.

Sinbad S                    I will give an advance payment.

Ittifaq                      You see Father how his eyes light up- money is all this urchin cares for.

Sinbad S                    Of course-what else is there in the world- but money, Hey Sinbad? Trust, honor, love, these things are nothing when compared to this diamond.

Ittifaq                    Why do you dishonor me like this- have I not always obeyed you?

Sinbad S                    You have never seen such bounty have you Sinbad? More awaits your safe return. Now go- you have twenty one days.

Sinbad                    Twenty one days?

Sinbad S                    Do not think Porter that because I'm blind I can't see you- or your thoughts. Do not betray my name-or the city that gave you life. The boat awaits-you will have no trouble in recognizing it I'm sure.

Sinbad                    Right- take the box- go to the boat-find the flower-come back-save the world-what could be easier.

Sinbad S                    Time is running out.

Sinbad                    *[To himself.]* And so shall I. *[He smiles at the diamond and goes. Silence]*

Sinbad S                    Has he gone?

Ittifaq                    Yes. What makes you think you'll ever see him again? I don't understand Father.

Sinbad S                    I know. My daughter—

Ittifaq                    If I were a boy-you would have sent me.

Sinbad S                    That is not the reason.

Ittifaq                    What then?

Sinbad S                    The box I gave the boy-was sent from- from your Mother.

Ittifaq                    My mother- whom I have never seen, and you gave it to him?

Sinbad S                    Jan Shah knew I could not undertake this journey. Therefore she must have assumed that I would send someone else. She will not be expecting him. *[He collapses again]*

Ittifaq                    Father?

Sinbad S                    Do not leave this house Ittifaq before-- *[He convulses in agony]*

Ittifaq                    Before what? Father?

Sinbad S                    Everything I have done- I have done to keep you safe, as I promised your Mother.

Ittifaq                    Father!

*He becomes unconscious. Lights fade on tableau of father and daughter.*

**PURCHASE PERUSAL FOR FULL SCRIPT**