

ABU HASSAN

Music by
von Weber

English Version by
Donald Pippin
(1988, 1997)

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

	Abu Hassan	our penniless hero
	Fatima	his wife
changer	Omar	the Caliph's money-
	Mesrur	the Caliph's righthand man
	Zemrud	the Sultana's housemaid
	Caliph	
	Sultana	
		(chorus of creditors)

Abu Hassan

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ACT I

Scene: Inside the humble dwelling of Abu Hassan and Fatima

ABU HASSAN	Dearest wife, pour out the wine! King and queen, tonight we dine.
FATIMA	Vain delusions you're pursuing. Mahomet, Mahomet says nothing doing.
ABU HASSAN	Let's begin with escargot And champagne.
FATIMA	A glass of water.
ABU HASSAN	How that goes against the grain! Lobster! Roasted pheasant!
FATIMA	Madman!

ABU HASSAN Coffee and liqueur!

FATIMA Have some bread.

BOTH What do other matters matter
When there's nothing on the platter?

ABU HASSAN Always living in the red!

FATIMA Not a sign of hope ahead.

ABU HASSAN Bread and water; water, bread!
Not a sign of hope ahead.

BOTH Bread and water! Water, bread!
Water, bread.

FATIMA I'll sing a song that you adore.
"When the dawn, attired in splendor,
With a touch serene and tender ..."

ABU HASSAN I'm just as hungry as before.
Dearest wife, no song can save the situation.
I repeat, pour out the wine,
Let us hope, tonight we dine.

FATIMA Vain illusions you're pursuing.
Mahomet, Mahomet says nothing doing.

BOTH What do other matters matter
When there's nothing on the platter?
Yes, I might as well be dead.
Bread and water. Water, bread.

ABU HASSAN A fine meal! Bread and water! (*indulgently*) But that's the way it is, when a wife is better at singing than at cooking.

FATIMA Love of my life! (*affectionately*) Yes, that's the way it is, when a husband is better at spending money than at earning it. Truly, you deserve to lose the one jewel you have left.

ABU HASSAN I still have a jewel? Dearest Fatima, let me embrace you! Then hurry and go sell it.

FATIMA Brute! You would sell your own wife?

ABU HASSAN My jewel, of course! But can I afford to keep such a luxury?

FATIMA Watch out! There are men who are pleading, yearning, trembling to lay their riches at my feet.

ABU HASSAN Lay riches at your feet? Priceless Fatima! Do not spare my tender feelings! Allow them, by all means! No, no! Tell me, who is the scoundrel that would turn you untrue to me? Who is the fine gentleman that would reward

your infidelity so lavishly? Nobody I know, I'm sure.

FATIMA Somebody you know all too well. Omar, the Caliph's greedy money-changer, and your own principal creditor.

ABU HASSAN Omar! That miserable miser eager to scatter gold to the four winds? I don't believe it.

FATIMA Then you might believe this letter. (*hands it to him*)

ABU HASSAN (*reads*) "Fairest Fatima! My heart burns with love for you. Quench that fire, and I shall count it a privilege to kiss the dust at your feet. Omar."

FATIMA Does that remove your doubt?

ABU HASSAN The swine! And what did you answer him?

FATIMA That I loathe him, detest him!

ABU HASSAN Well-spoken! Good girl! But perhaps you could have led the rascal around by the nose for a bit. The fact is, we absolutely have to get money. The situation is desperate. Something must be done! But what? Any ideas?

FATIMA I've wracked my brain, but no result.

ABU HASSAN No ideas at all?

FATIMA Not one!

ABU HASSAN Then we are in the same boat. We may have to go begging.

FATIMA I would die first.

ABU HASSAN That's it.

FATIMA What is it?

ABU HASSAN I've got it!

FATIMA What a clever man I married! Come, let's hear.

ABU HASSAN Why didn't I think of it sooner? It's as easy as taking a nap. Die!

FATIMA Abu Hassan! Are you out of your mind? Heartless man!

ABU HASSAN Don't misunderstand me. Not the real thing, heaven forbid! You are merely to don the mask of death.

FATIMA And how would that improve our situation?

ABU HASSAN You die — but why stop there? We both die. And as a gentleman, I shall go first.

FATIMA I am dying to know what all of this means.

ABU HASSAN Listen carefully. When you bring the sad news of my sudden demise to your mistress, the Sultana, she will certainly give you a bag of gold for the funeral expenses, as well as a handsome cloth to wrap up the body. It's tradition. And as soon as you are back with your booty, I shall render the same service for you, vis a vis the Caliph, who will be no less generous.

FATIMA Dear Abu, we die together! But paradise can wait! I'm off to the Sultana!
(she exits)

ABU HASSAN The sky is sunny,
 The future bright;
 And I have plans already
 For spending all that money.

 I'll use it for financing
 A feast with song and dancing,
 For a banquet
 With music and dancing.
 My wife will do the honors,
 Goddess of the feast.
 With means to muster up the payment,
 I'll deck her out in finest raiment.
 My comely queen
 Will grace the scene,
 My crowning jewel of the Middle East.

 Hey, servants! Bring the best!
 To each and every guest
 A wholesome, hearty swallow;
 Fatima first, I follow.
 Come! Drink to longer life.

 To love that does not falter,
 More solid than Gibraltar —
 To you, my darling wife.
 There's time for tears hereafter;
 For now, with joy and laughter
 We'll celebrate and sing.

 Unfurl the flag, be festive,
 For life and love go best if
 You make the rafters ring.

 Oh, Fatima! My devotion
 Is a strong and sturdy boat;
 Deeper than sea or ocean
 Is the tide whereon I float.

 Gentle, tender,
 Gracious and forgiving,
 Even when the well is dry.

You are all I want in living,
And for you I'd freely die.

Oh, Fatima! My devotion
Is a strong and sturdy boat.
Deeper than sea or ocean
Is the tide whereon I float.

A fig for the treasure
That fortune can fashion!
Fatima is my pleasure,
My prize and my passion.

Prize, pleasure and passion!
When life goes amiss,
The thorns you remove
With a smile and a kiss.

Then kiss me! Embrace me!
In love, light of heart, let us go.
Come, kiss me! Embrace me!
So on with the show!

Yet ... What if the scheme unravels?
No matter!
My cares I quickly scatter
With music, love, and wine.
With dreams aplenty,
A wife sweet and twenty,
The world is mine.
Fortune! Riches!
All the world is mine!

(a loud knock from outside)

ABU HASSAN Who's there? *(aside)* Worse luck! These vultures that
feed on living flesh!

OMAR Abu Hassan, you know who we are.

ABU HASSAN Since you call me by name, I assume that we are not un-
acquainted. *(opening the door)* Omar, my good friend!

OMAR *(entering, with creditors behind him)* We come to collect.

ABU HASSAN Go right ahead. Don't let me stop you. You're welcome to
every penny you can find.

OMAR You owe us money.

CREDITORS Lots of money. Overdue. Pay up.

ABU HASSAN Now, now! You have my promise of repayment, and that
promise is as good as gold. In fact, my wife this minute has gone to the

Sultana for money. And as soon as she returns, I plan to go to the Caliph for the same purpose.

OMAR A likely story! If the Caliph had the slightest intention of giving you money, he could have done so long ago.

ABU HASSAN Friend, Fatima would grieve to hear of such distrust, coming from you.

OMAR Fatima? Does she speak of me?

ABU HASSAN Does she speak of you! She praises you to the sky for your kindness and generosity — the very qualities that she admires most in a man.

OMAR I suppose I am rather generous. Now and then.

ABU HASSAN Then now is your chance to show it! For Fatima!

OMAR Just what are you asking for?

ABU HASSAN Postponement!

CREDITORS Gold! Gold! Gold!
 Too long you've kept us waiting.
 You've lost your credit rating.
 We'll not be kept on hold.
 Gold! Gold! Gold!

ABU HASSAN Gentlemen, patience, please! As I cannot satisfy all of you, I don't wish to offend any. Come back next week.

CREDITORS No! No! No!
 Let's have an understanding:
 Full payment we're demanding.
 Hand over what you owe.
 You'll pay, you'll pay,
 You'll pay in full before we go.
 Pay up! Pay up!
 Hand over what you owe.

ABU HASSAN Omar, most compassionate of money lenders! Help me out — for Fatima!

OMAR Poor woman! I feel sorry for her. Brought to ruin by your extravagance.

ABU HASSAN Yes, but let's not stop with mere sympathy.

OMAR (*to creditors*) Very well. Come to my place. I will personally take care of the bills. Now are you satisfied?

CREDITORS Yes! Yes! Yes!

OMAR (*to Abu*) So are you now contented?

ABU HASSAN Yes! Yes! Yes! And you?

OMAR Yes! Yes! Yes!
My offer I've presented.
(I'm leaving, though I may
Be returning right away.)

ABU HASSAN (The rascal is contented
With what he has presented.
He'll find to his dismay
That I've the final say.)

CREDITORS We vultures are contented;
No longer need we stay.
A showdown circumvented,
We'll leave without delay.
We're leaving.
Of course, we'll leave without delay.

OMAR Her husband is contented,
He's quite contented,
With what I have presented,
But he in fact will pay.

ABU HASSAN (The rascal!) All contented, all contented.
(An offer he's presented,
But I've the final say.
The rascal!)
All contented.

(Omar and creditors exit)

(alone) Allah be thanked! Finally free of these bloodsuckers! Debtor's prison? Not for me! I prefer fresh air.

FATIMA *(returning)* My dear, darling has-been husband! Success! I've got the money and we can bury you — if that's the way you want to spend it.

ABU HASSAN Later, if you please. Things have been happening here while you were away.

FATIMA Nothing serious, I hope?

ABU HASSAN Omar came knocking.

FATIMA Sounds like trouble.

ABU HASSAN With a tidal wave of creditors — all crashing in on me.

FATIMA Poor lamb! What did you do?

ABU HASSAN Oh, I sent them away satisfied.

FATIMA Without money?

ABU HASSAN With charm.

FATIMA You mean, with witchcraft.

ABU HASSAN I spoke the magic word into Omar's ear. Fatima! Fatima!
And presto! The old rascal invited the entire pack to his house, where this
minute he is paying off all my debts.

FATIMA Then I am afraid you have succeeded in getting us out of the frying
pan and into the fire. This gift comes with strings attached.

ABU HASSAN Don't worry. We'll fend him off. But now let's hear your story.

FATIMA Blinded with tears, staggered by grief, I knock at the Sultana's
door. Through broken sobs, the words stumble out: "Dearest lady! Abu
Hassan, the young, handsome, unfortunate Abu Hassan is no more. He is dead."
(She starts to cry.)

ABU HASSAN *(also crying)* Cut off before his prime! So gifted, so promising!
What did she answer?

FATIMA Here is your answer! *(laughing, she hands him a purse of gold)*

ABU HASSAN My precious Fatima! May you never have to shed tears for
me again!

Dry those eyes that were not made for weeping;
Leave the land of sighs alone.
For your cares are in my keeping;
Every tear I call my own.
Every sigh and every tear I call my own.

FATIMA Break of day bestows a jewel,
Sprinkling dew upon the leaf;
Tears of love declare renewal,
Sign of promise, not pain or grief.
Sign of promise, not of grief.

ABU HASSAN Trust in love.

FATIMA I've never doubted.

ABU HASSAN Listen only to the heart.

FATIMA Though the present skies are clouded,
Sunny days are bound to start.

BOTH Though the present skies are clouded,
Sunny days are bound to start.
Listen only to the heart.
Only to the heart.

Our love is a long, silken ladder
That leads to a sky starry-crowned.
Let others be wiser but sadder
By keeping both feet on the ground.

Though happy-go-lucky,
Though mildly demented,
And game for adventure and fun,
We go on our way well-contented,
With mischief and malice for none.

Though madcap and mildly demented,
And game for adventure and fun,
We go on our way well-contented,
With mischief and malice for none.

FATIMA Apart or together,

ABU HASSAN Apart or together,

BOTH In winter, fall, summer and spring,

FATIMA We're birds of a feather,

ABU HASSAN We're birds of a feather,

BOTH And ready like swallows to soar and to sing.

ABU HASSAN Dry those eyes that were not made for weeping;
Leave the land of sighs alone.
All your cares are in my keeping;
Every tear I call my own.

BOTH Our love is a long, silken ladder
That leads to a sky starry-crowned.
Let others be wiser but sadder
By keeping both feet on the ground.

Though madcap and mildly demented,
We go on our way well-contented,
With mischief and malice for none.

Though mildly demented,
We go well contented,
We go on our way well contented.

FATIMA To the Caliph! Hurry!

(Abu Hassan exits)

Let's hope that he reaches him with the news of my unexpected death before the Caliph learns of his unexpected death from the Sultana. Thank goodness it's only make-believe! Despite his faults, I love Abu Hassan with all my heart, and without him, life would be nothing.

The nightingale grows languid
Within a cage confined;
The captive bird is silent,
A prisoner unresigned.

But let the door swing open,
Let distant skies invite,
With wings outspread in rapture,
She gathers into flight.

Around the grove she circles,
And glides from bush to tree,
Then heads for new horizons,
Aloft, at large and free.

How much I differ from her example!
Although confined, my scope is ample.

My home is in my husband's heart;
I seek no wider spaces.
Here want and worry play a part,
Yet love provides the basis.

FATIMA

Within these walls I find delight,
My reason for existence;
I'll not be goaded into flight
Toward castles in the distance.
From my own nest I shall not stray
In search of freedom far away.

My home is in my husband's heart,
I seek no wider spaces.
Here want and worry play a part,
Yet love provides the basis.

Safely shielded,
At rest, my wings are folded.
From my simple nest
I shall not stray.
From my nest, my simple nest I shall not stray,
For a fortune far away.

OMAR (*enters*) Pardon, lovely Fatima! All alone? Your husband is out?
My dear, why so sad? I have brought something that might cheer you up.

Here's the pile of debts delinquent,
Bills of credit for collection,
Brought today for your inspection,
All delinquent!
See them! Feel them!
Payment on demand!
Here I have them in my hand.

FATIMA

Residue of rash behavior!
Where to turn to find a savior?
I rely on your indulgence;
You alone will understand.

OMAR They can be yours.

FATIMA You give me courage.

OMAR Love will out.

FATIMA Is that your motive?

OMAR May I hope?

FATIMA Must I confess?

OMAR Are you mine?

FATIMA No ... yes ... no ... yes ... no, no!

OMAR (How my clever plan is working!
Now she nibbles at the bait.)

FATIMA (Does he think the plan is working,
That I nibble at the bait?)

OMAR I can tell the passion lurking
In the throbbing of your heart.
Oh, the struggle! The emotion!

FATIMA You can tell the passion lurking
In the bottom of my heart.

OMAR You love me! Confess it!
You love me, confess it!

FATIMA Oh, spare me! Oh, how did you guess it?
No, no!

OMAR I come to the point of my visit:
To give and receive satisfaction.

FATIMA Your purpose to give satisfaction?
Continue.

OMAR We'll settle accounts
By way of a simple transaction:
The bills you can buy with a kiss.

FATIMA Most tender and touching of offers!

OMAR What bargain is better than this?
For you I would empty my coffers.

FATIMA A bargain?

OMAR You pay with a kiss.

FATIMA (He believes the game is over,
That I yield to his demands;
Soon enough will he discover
That he leaves with empty hands.)

OMAR (I'm relieved the game is over;
She will yield to my demands.
No, no! I'll not leave with empty hands.)

OMAR How much longer must I suffer?
Can your heart be made of stone?

FATIMA (Goodbye, old bluffer,
For my heart remains my own.)

OMAR Only one kiss!

FATIMA No, sir!

OMAR One kiss!

FATIMA No, sir!

OMAR One kiss, then another, then another,
Then another!
Can your heart be made of stone?

FATIMA Mine are for another,
For another!
Mine are meant for one alone!

(peering out the window) Heaven help us!

OMAR What's the matter?

FATIMA My husband! He'll kill you, kill both of us! Jealousy turns him into a tiger, a savage bull, a raving lunatic!

OMAR Merciful Allah! Save me! Get me out of here!

FATIMA Too late! Quick, into the closet! *(Omar slips into the closet; Fatima locks it behind him and removes the key.)* Wait there, brave Romeo! Your passion needs time to cool off.

(Abu enters, carrying a bag of gold and a piece of brocade.)

FATIMA *(to Abu)* Back so soon, my broken-hearted widower?
(whispers) I've caught the bird.

ABU HASSAN Which bird?

FATIMA *(indicating the closet)* The amorous Omar!

(*aside*) Aha! Gold and brocade! Signs of success!

ABU HASSAN Take a look. Enjoy them!
(*spreads the brocade on the divan and puts the bag of gold on the table*)

FATIMA (*whispers*) I was also successful. I got back the bills.

ABU HASSAN (*whispers*) Good work! The old scoundrel thinks he has struck a bargain. Ho! We'll give him second thoughts about that.
(*aloud*) Why is this closet locked? Are you hiding someone?

FATIMA Darling, how could you think such a thing? You're not suggesting ... ?

ABU HASSAN Where is the key?

FATIMA The ... the key?

ABU HASSAN Yes, the key! Open that door!

FATIMA I've looked in every nook and corner!
That cursed key is not around.

ABU HASSAN I don't suppose you tried the keyhole —
The last place where it would be found.
I don't suppose you tried the keyhole —
The place a key is never found.

OMAR (*inside the closet*)
Poor me! It's hot and getting hotter.
If I were only at home safe and sound!
To be at home safe and sound!

ABU HASSAN It's even worse than I suspected;
There's even more than meets the eye.

FATIMA Your empty charges stand corrected;
I'd never stoop to tell a lie.

FATIMA and ABU HASSAN
Ill-fated, he's in shock and shaken,
Too well aware of danger near.
He'll learn if I am not mistaken
To stay away from here.
He'll learn to stay away from here.

OMAR
Ill-fated, I'm in shock and shaken,
Too well aware of danger near.
To purchase love was much mistaken.
Oh, Allah! Get me out of here!
Just get me out!
Oh, Allah! Get me out of here!

ABU HASSAN Locked in the closet,
I am convinced you conceal a lover.

That door I'll open.
Then I shall send him
Running for cover.
I shall demolish him, polish him off.

FATIMA Where, where was it?
Your accusation makes me scoff.
Are you expecting me
To now unlock it?
Inside your pocket
You have the key.

ABU HASSAN I find your teasing
More than displeasing.
Open the door!

FATIMA Searching all over, no lurking lover
Will you discover.
Still I cannot find it. *(She lets the key fall, as if by accident.)*

ABU HASSAN *(quickly picking up the key)* Ah, ha!

OMAR Oy vey!

FATIMA and ABU HASSAN
Dragged out of hiding!
Lust comes to light.
On a deadly course colliding,
With sword or fist {we'll/they'll} fight.

OMAR Dragged out of hiding!
Lust comes to light.
On a deadly course colliding,
I'll surely die of fright.

FATIMA *(at the window)* Oh, dear! It's Mesrur, the Caliph's right hand man.
He's headed this way.

ABU HASSAN Then we have urgent business to attend to. The closet can
wait. Quick! Lie down on the humble bier, feet towards Mecca. *(Fatima does so)*
I deck you with brocade, place a flower in your hand. So! Let him come!
(he kneels at her side, drying his eyes from time to time with a handkerchief)

MESRUR *(enters)* By the holy camel's hump! The Caliph has won his bet.

ABU HASSAN *(rises and goes to him)* Friend, you come to console me. It's no
use! She's gone forever! Nothing will bring her back.

MESRUR Poor Abu Hassan!

ABU HASSAN Her own very words, just before she breathed her last. Behold
her sweet face, now so calm, serene ...

MESRUR Spare me this sad sight. *(turning away)*

ABU HASSAN God grant that I may soon go to join her in eternity.

MESRUR Now, now! You mustn't give up. Only the faint-hearted are broken by misfortune. Come, there are still many beautiful women in the world.

ABU HASSAN What did you mean as you came in? The Caliph has won a wager?

MESRUR Ah, yes! The Caliph's wife had the strange notion that it was you who had died. In fact, she insisted that this was so. So they both made bets. Obviously, she is the loser.

ABU HASSAN Alas, yes! The evidence lies before you.

MESRUR So much the worse for you, and so much the better for the Caliph. I shall hurry off to bring him the good — the unhappy news. (*he hurries out*)

FATIMA (*sitting up*) Thank goodness he's gone. I almost burst out laughing.

ABU HASSAN There he goes, over the hills and far away.

FATIMA Many beautiful women in the world indeed!

ABU HASSAN He said it, not I.

FATIMA So the Caliph wins a wager. That should put him in a good mood.

ABU HASSAN Our work is but half done. The Sultana will not take the message on faith. She will check it out for herself. (*at the window*) Just as I thought! Hurry! The gold cloth! Cover me up! (*he lies down on the divan*)

FATIMA Who's coming?

ABU HASSAN Zemrud, her housemaid.

FATIMA Now for my tragic scene. Music, inspire me!

Here lies my love, so fair, so brave,
A longer life denied him.
Oh, would that I could share the grave,
To lie in peace beside him.

My all, my being and my breath
For you I would be giving
To enter first the halls of death.
You die. I go on living.

ZEMRUD (*enters*) I don't know what's the matter with Mesrur. He said that it was you, not your husband, who was dead.

FATIMA Ah, would it were true! Would that death had taken me instead of him.

ZEMRUD No, no dear Fatima! Better ten men than one woman. But let me take one last look at your husband, so that I can swear I saw him with my own eyes.

FATIMA Look on and weep. Here lies my other self, my better half ...

ZEMRUD Poor Abu Hassan! Poor Fatima! How healthy he looks, as if merely lying down for a short rest.

FATIMA Yes, my eyes could also deceive me, just as yours do. But no! The truth is unbearable, but nonetheless true. I am a widow. A widow! (*she weeps*)

ZEMRUD There, there! But now I must run to the Caliph and set the record straight. Cheer up, my dear. You are still young, attractive, and Abu Hassan was not the only man in the world. (*she leaves*)

ABU HASSAN (*sitting up*) The hangman take that witch! Cheer up indeed!

FATIMA She was only being philosophical. But I am certainly glad there is no need for that. Still, I can't help wondering how far we can carry this. Things could become quite awkward.

ABU HASSAN (*at the window*) Good God! It's the Caliph and the Sultana! They're both coming!

FATIMA Oh, dear! Now I wish I were dead!

FATIMA and OMAR

Like a drum my heart is pounding
In fear of the Caliph's mayhem.
How? How to stop him or delay him?
For a miracle we pray.
How to delay him! For a miracle we pray.

ABU HASSAN My heart like a drum is apounding
In fear of the Caliph's mayhem.
Though none can stop or delay him,
With bluff we can still save the day.
Though none can delay him,
With bluff we can still save the day.
We must face it.

FATIMA Are you laughing?

ABU HASSAN Not for joy.

FATIMA Oh, what to answer? What to say?

ABU HASSAN In the heat we'll be enlightened.
We must simply wait and see.

FATIMA I have never felt so frightened.

ABU HASSAN Frankly, dear, the same with me.

FATIMA Do you hear?

ABU HASSAN They come! We fail if ...

FATIMA It's Milady!

ABU HASSAN And the Caliph!

ALL THREE Exposed red-handed!
 In what hot water have we landed?
 What? What? What have I brought upon my head?

ABU HASSAN (*to Fatima*) Hurry, hurry! In position!

FATIMA I'm already nearly dead.

(*Fatima lies on the divan; Abu Hassan covers her.*)

ABU HASSAN Soon to wake in paradise ...
 Gone is pride and vain ambition.

FATIMA Never more to see the light.

(*Abu Hassan lies beside her.*)

OMAR & ABU HASSAN
 Quiet, quiet!

ABU HASSAN And good night.

FATIMA & OMAR And good night.

ABU HASSAN And good night.

CHORUS Open wide the palace portals.
 To the dust your servants fall.
 Bow your heads, unworthy mortals,
 For the Prince who comes to call.

 To the dust you lowly servants fall,
 As he deigns to notice one and all.
 Bow your heads, unworthy mortals,
 For the Prince who comes to call. Bow down!

CALIPH So I have received a false report? I hear first that one is dead, then
 the other. But it is obvious that both are dead.

SULTANA So who wins the wager?

CALIPH The question becomes, which of the two died first?

SULTANA Abu Hassan! And I win.

CALIPH And I claim that Fatima died first, and you lose.

MESRUR Sovereign! (*indicating the table*) Perhaps these papers can shed

some light. (*he hands them over*)

CALIPH (*glancing through them*) Bills! A mountain of bills, promissory notes. No doubt this is what drove Abu Hassan to his death.

SULTANA First. Whereupon, Fatima died of grief, as a good wife should. So I win the wager.

CALIPH It could have been the other way round. By the prophet! I offer here and now a thousand gold pieces to the person who can prove it one way or the other. Did the husband or the wife die first?

ABU HASSAN (*rising to the occasion*) Mighty ruler!

ALL Allah preserve us! Mercy! Good lord!

ABU HASSAN I claim the thousand gold pieces! It was I that died first.

CALIPH What is this?

ABU A miracle! Your overwhelming generosity has set my heart beating again.

CALIPH Stand up and explain this miracle.

ABU HASSAN (*kneeling*) The truth is simple. Desperation and despair plunged us into an untimely grave.

SULTANA And your wife? ...

ABU HASSAN A kind, gentle word from your lips *might* drive the blood back into her veins.

SULTANA Fatima! Darling!

FATIMA (*rising, as all watch in suspense*)
Sweet mistress! Pardon! We were desperate ...

CALIPH So this is the way you would inform us of your distress. I don't wonder. So many bills! How could you ever hope to pay them off?

ABU HASSAN Oh, that would not be difficult. One of your own subjects generously offered to buy them up, in return for ... Fatima.

SULTANA Monstrous!

CALIPH Name the scoundrel that dared make such a vile proposition.

ABU HASSAN (*opens the closet*)
You see him before you. Omar, the money changer!

OMAR (*abjectly*) Your most humble, obedient servant.

CALIPH Wretch! Were I not a merciful man, you would be sentenced to the death you deserve.

OMAR Oh, but you are merciful! Everyone knows how merciful you are!

CALIPH Out of my sight! (*to Mesrur*) Order my treasurer to pay the thousand gold pieces to Abu Hassan.

ABU HASSAN Glory be! We're rich! Inspired master! Oh, King of men!
Who would not rise from the dead to honor such a wise ruler? Long live the Caliph!

ALL All honor to the Caliph!
Forever may he reign,
The pride of his domain.

We celebrate the Caliph,
The leader of the realm.
On tranquil seas we sail if
His hand is at the helm.
All hail! All hail!

The End