

# 1001 NIGHTS

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Revival Draft 3

***"Home is located in a set of routines, a repetition of habitual interactions, in styles of behaviour and in dress, in memories and myths, and in stories carried around in the head."*** John Berger

## **1001 Nights**

*The action takes place in present day Damascus then in a UK city. In the UK there are three environments. Upstage are three windows allowing us to see into two flats on possibly the eighth floor: SHAHRAZAD's bedroom, her kitchen and THE NEIGHBOUR's bedroom. They are flats in a tower block of flats on a council estate.*

*In front is a rooftop. This is a secret place where the children escape to. It is full of rubbish abandoned by the inhabitants of the block of flats. In the centre is a block with a grill. It is a ventilation outlet for the block of flats. Occasionally air shoots out of it.*

*In front of the rooftop on ground level is a pathway to the outside world.*

*At first the encounters between SHAHRAZAD and THE NEIGHBOUR are between people who do not speak the same language. They use whatever's at hand to communicate what they can. As time passes SHAHRAZAD becomes more and more fluent in English. When they play, they grab whatever is around and through the power of their imaginations magic the objects into whatever they need to be.*

### **Characters:**

SHAHRAZAD - a nine-year old girl

THE FATHER

THE MOTHER

THE NEIGHBOUR - a nine-year old girl

THE MOTHER and THE NEIGHBOUR can be doubled.

## 1. HOME

*Damascus.*

V/O: Night 1

*Also projected in English and Arabic, as are all the nights.*

*A table and three chairs. The table is set for dinner. SHAHRAZAD is seated cross-legged on a carpet holding THE BOOK. This is the first thing we see. She opens it, light pours out lighting up her face. THE MOTHER and THE FATHER appear behind. THE FATHER sits at the table playing his instrument. THE MOTHER watches SHAHRAZAD, she lives and breathes the stories she's reading. It could be a story about a flying carpet. Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh. THE MOTHER turns to the audience:*

THE MOTHER:

Once upon a time there was lovely old house in Damascus, built around a shaded and tiled courtyard with a square pool in the centre where a small jet of water pulsed. Doves flew down in the heat of the day to rinse their dusty wings, and the small lemon trees breathed honey.

It was not unlike many other houses in that city, but for the family that lived there it was not like any of them, it was home. In this home lived a Vizier and his wife (*she references her husband and herself*) who had a daughter called SHAHRAZAD and she was clever and learned. She had read nearly all the books of literature-

THE FATHER:

- philosophy -

THE MOTHER:

- and medicine. She knew poetry by heart, the sayings of men and the wise words of Kings. She never forgot anything she read for she lived for her books. She loved them so much that it was impossible to get her to put them down.

*It's dinner time. THE MOTHER and THE FATHER look at each other. They know it's going to be difficult to prise SHAHRAZAD from her book.*

THE FATHER:

Shahrazad.

THE MOTHER:

Shahrazad!

THE FATHER:

It's dinner-time.

THE MOTHER:  
Shahrazad!

*THE FATHER and THE MOTHER try to steal SHAHRAZAD's book without her knowing.*

*First attempt: THE FATHER crawls up from behind SHAHRAZAD in an attempt to nip in and get the book. He's caught and he covers it up by pretending to...do press-ups! THE MOTHER joins in the subterfuge by counting THE FATHER's press-ups.*

THE MOTHER:  
One, two, three/

THE FATHER:  
/eighty-eight, eighty-nine, ninety. Ah!

*He finishes his press-ups.*

*Second attempt: THE MOTHER creeps up from behind SHAHRAZAD. She's caught and so covers up by pretending to...squash a mosquito.*

THE MOTHER:  
Mosquitos! They're everywhere. You were lucky.

SHAHRAZAD: *To the audience.*  
I think I know what they're up to.

*Third attempt: THE MOTHER plays a game of charades.*

THE FATHER:  
'Book', 'film', 'play'...

*SHAHRAZAD is momentarily drawn in.*

*Both parents see an opportunity. THE MOTHER's chosen title for charades is 'Ali Baba & the Forty Thieves'. She plays.*

THE FATHER:  
Six words.

Second word.

*THE MOTHER mimes shaving a beard.*

SHAHRAZAD: *(to the audience)*  
I love this game.

THE FATHER:

Beard.

Shaving.

*THE MOTHER mimes cutting hair.*

THE FATHER:  
Hairdresser?

SHAHRAZAD:  
Barber!

*THE MOTHER indicates the number 40 with her fingers.*

THE FATHER:  
...40.

*THE FATHER can see where this is going. They start to surround SHAHRAZAD.*

*To Shahrazad, prompting her.*

Barber. Forty...

SHAHRAZAD:  
Ali Baba and the forty/

THE MOTHER/THE FATHER  
Thieves!

*And THE MOTHER 'thieves' the book.*

SHAHRAZAD:  
Mum!

*THE MOTHER sits on the book on a chair at the table. SHAHRAZAD, beside herself, tries to get the book from underneath her mother's bum by tickling her.*

*THE MOTHER knows she will lose this fight so throws the book to THE FATHER. They play a game of piggy-in-the-middle as SHAHRAZAD attempts to get the book. It all gets a little bit frantic. Lots of screams and tickles. To calm SHAHRAZAD down THE FATHER thinks of a new game.*

THE FATHER: *(catching the book)*  
You can have it back before bed if....

*He thinks, flicks through the book finds a page*

...you can tell us what comes next.

*SHAHRAZAD protests. Reading from the book...*

"The man who seemed to be the captain approached the rock...

SHAHRAZAD:

...and came very close to the tree where Ali Baba was hiding, and after he went through some shrubs, Ali Baba distinctly heard him utter the words, "Open Sesame!"

*That was too easy. Of course she knows Ali Baba.*

THE FATHER:

That was too easy. We'll find a harder one.

*He throws the book to THE MOTHER. She catches the book and finds a harder story.*

THE MOTHER:

"Fate brought them to a beautiful island abounding in trees, ripe fruits, fragrant flowers, singing birds, and clear streams..."

SHAHRAZAD:

"...Sinbad landed and sat down by a spring of pure water among the trees and dozed off and rested there until the sweetness of the breeze and fragrance of the flowers lulled him into a deep sleep."

*She's right again and revels in her knowledge. She goes to claim the book. They can't believe she's winning. THE MOTHER throws the book to THE FATHER.*

THE FATHER:

O.K. last one.

SHAHRAZAD:

But that's unfair!

THE FATHER:

"Then the demon cried, 'Then take what you have brought on yourself,' turned himself into a scorpion"...

SHAHRAZAD:

"...and with an open mouth he rushed towards the girl who quickly turned into a huge serpent..."

*She loves this story. She climbs onto a chair to reenact the scene.*

.... "and the two fought a bitter battle for a long time. Then the scorpion turned into a vulture and flew outside the palace and the girl changed into an eagle and flew after the vulture. The two were gone for a long time, but suddenly the ground split asunder".

*A distant dramatic rumble of an approaching war can be heard. THE MOTHER and THE FATHER come together at their window and look in the direction of the sound.*

What was that?

THE MOTHER:  
Nothing darling.

*THE MOTHER takes the book from THE FATHER. She gives it to SHAHRAZAD.*

Come, let's eat.

SHAHRAZAD:  
Dad?

Dad?

Tell us the story of Abu Hasan.

*She can sense something is wrong.*

THE FATHER:  
Not tonight.

SHAHRAZAD:  
You promised.

THE FATHER:  
No.

SHAHRAZAD:  
Because you can't remember it!

I bet you can't.

*SHAHRAZAD doesn't like this sense of foreboding. She persists by prompting.*

SHAHRAZAD:  
"In the city of Baghdad there was a man called Abu Hasan who was a very successful merchant..."

*THE FATHER resists.*

"...his wife had died when they were both young; and his friends had recently begged Abu to marry again. And so to please them Abu Hasan..."

*THE FATHER gives in to reassure his daughter that everything is OK. First reluctantly looking back towards where the sounds came from ...*

THE FATHER:

"...agreed to marry again. So he arranged a huge wedding for his friends and family" ...

*He looks towards the rumbling on the horizon.*

...and even his enemies".

*Then more engaged.*

"And there was a huge feast with rices of/five different colours

SHAHRAZAD: (*Joining in*)  
/five different colours

THE FATHER:  
and sherbets of/as many more

SHAHRAZAD:  
/as many more/

THE FATHER:  
/And meats stuffed with walnuts, almonds and pistachios. And after everyone had eaten their fill Abu Hasan rose to his feet and said, 'Friends, it's time for you to meet my new bride. You all know her...she's the woman who owns the shop next door. She's beautiful, she's delectable, she's...

*He casts THE MOTHER in his play as...*

...the new Mrs Abu Hasan!!

*Even though he's told this story a 1001 times before THE MOTHER has never taken part before. He leads her to her stage.*

Now, as is traditional in this part of the world the bride was paraded in her three different wedding dresses.

*The Father does his 'table trick,' whipping the table cloth off the table, all the crockery remains! He uses the beautifully patterned tablecloth to dress THE MOTHER in the three wedding dresses. THE MOTHER plays along albeit under duress. It is evocative of their very own wedding.*

THE FATHER:

In her first dress, she was veiled from the eyes of the onlooking guests, as she swayed her hips coquettishly.

*He prompts the mother to sway her hips coquettishly.*

Coquettishly...

*She sways her hips reluctantly.*

Her second dress was printed with a fantastical pattern of many vivid colours like a flower garden in the height of summer.

The final dress, was a rich deep green. In this she attained the height of beauty, shaming a bronze spear with her slender form and outshining the rising moon with her radiant face. She surpassed every fair woman in the world and broke every heart.

*THE FATHER leads THE MOTHER up to the table and beckons her to climb up onto it. She hesitates...he lifts her.*

THE MOTHER:

The plates!

SHAHRAZAD:

I'll do it

*SHAHRAZAD clears the plates. THE FATHER mounts the table to join his wife.*

THE FATHER:

After hours of eating, Abu Hasan was stuffed to the eyeballs with meats and almonds. He rose slowly from his seat went to join his wife; but as he bent to prostrate himself at her feet the greediness of his eating began to catch up with him...

*We hear the sound of an enormous fart.*

For a moment time stood still. The guests all looked at each other not knowing what to say. It was the biggest stinkiest fart that any of them had ever known. The consuming fire of embarrassment filled Abu Hassan's heart. And he didn't know what to do. He couldn't possibly go on with the ceremony. Then he had an idea. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his mobile phone and he said,

*He descends the table.*

"I can't seem to get a signal in here. Is anyone else on Orange? I can sometimes get it in the car park, I'll just nip outside."

*THE FATHER flees the wedding.*

As soon as he was outside he fell to his knees in despair, and ran, ran into the shadow of the night, down through the city streets to the dockyard.

And there he boarded a ship for India.

*THE FATHER journeys to India.*

And he sailed across the ocean to that far and distant land. And there he found himself a nice steady job, signing and filing papers for the government, signing and filing papers, and he focused on his work and tried to forget the terrible humiliation that had befallen him at home.

And for ten years or so this worked, but after that time he began to miss his homeland so much that he said, "I must return." So he left his job, went back to the dockyard, sailed across the ocean.

*THE FATHER returns.*

As he approached his home city he thought, what if people remember my name and the terrible fart I did on my wedding day?

So he disguised himself and crept into the city to listen in on people's conversations and for seven days he heard nothing. And he was so relieved and he thought finally I can leave the past behind me.

And he sat down for a rest. And he happened to hear from an open window the voice of a small child, talking to its mother.

*THE FATHER now at the table between SHAHRAZAD and THE MOTHER passes SHAHRAZAD a spoon and makes her puppeteer it representing the child in the story. He passes THE MOTHER a larger spoon and makes her puppeteer it representing the mother.*

And the child said, "Mother can you remember the day I was born?" and THE MOTHER said, "yes darling, I can remember exactly when you were born, you were born at the same moment that Abu Hasan farted." (*As the little girl*) "Abu Hasan farted, Abu Hasan farted! Abu Hasan farted!!!!!!!"

Abu Hasan was appalled, he staggered away in confusion and looked up to the heavens' and said, "My God, the day that I farted has become a date in history and will be remembered forever."

He went back to the dockyard and sailed across to India (*reenacting the journey*) and there he remained in exile for the rest of his life until one day...

...he died.

*A protracted death enactment, with a final fart at the end.*

## 2. EXILE

*We hear a loud explosion. The war has started and gets nearer and nearer during the hole scene. Fluctuation of warm light. Flashes of fire. Each flash/explosion draws the attention of the family out front to the oncoming war. The sounds gets louder and closer. Items of clothing and bags fly in from above. THE MOTHER dresses THE FATHER and SHAHRAZAD, preparing them for their flight, giving them bags and clothes.*

THE MOTHER:

There was once a King and his Vizier. The Vizier was a generous and outspoken man who was very popular with the people. The King became jealous of the Vizier and fearful that he would overthrow him, so he summoned his guards and ordered them to seize the Vizier's home and belongings, to take his money, and seal up the house. It so happened that one of the guards was a man who had been a servant to the Vizier and he loved him very much. When he heard the King's order, he ran as fast as he could to the gate of the Vizier's house. When he saw him he kissed his hand and said, "O my lord hurry up, hurry up. The King is angry with you. He has ordered your arrest. Run for your life, and don't fall into his hands, for he will not spare you."

*Passing THE FATHER his instrument case. They are now ready.*

THE MOTHER:

You need to leave. Let's think of this like going on a trip.

SHAHRAZAD:

Mum?

THE MOTHER:

I can't go.

SHAHRAZAD:

Mum!

THE MOTHER:

I'll join you later.

SHAHRAZAD:

Promise?

THE MOTHER:

Yes, promise.

SHAHRAZAD:

What about books? Can I take books?

THE MOTHER:

Just one.

*She gives SHAHRAZAD her book.*

*(To THE FATHER)* Call me when you get there.

### 3. THE JOURNEY

*SHAHRAZAD and THE FATHER begin their journey:*

*V/O (in English and Arabic):*

*Night 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11...through to 240.*

*Also projected in English and Arabic.*

THE MOTHER:

*/The Vizier and his daughter left in confusion, not knowing where they would go. They rode until they were outside the city. Then they climbed a mountain, and when they descended to the other side, they saw a vast wilderness that they had never seen before. After three months traveling with different caravans, sometimes over deserts and barren mountains, and sometimes through populous and fertile countries, they reached the sea.*

*At the same time THE FATHER with luggage in his hands, SHAHRAZAD with a duvet and her book in hand and a rucksack on her back navigate the dining table and chairs as if they are landscapes of countries, borders and different forms of transportation. THE FATHER leads the way, assisting his daughter, sometimes carrying her when she is tired. The sounds of trains, lorries – a soundscape of exile. The mother clears the table and chairs as they pass.*

*SHAHRAZAD and THE FATHER disappear. THE MOTHER tries to catch one last glimpse of her family, then she too departs.*

THE MOTHER V/O:

*They set out by ship and sailed for forty days, the sea raged with fury, buffeting them with huge waves, but on the forty-first day fate brought them to an island.*

*SHAHRAZAD and THE FATHER 'arrive' in the UK. Leaves fall. We are outside an estate of social housing in a city in the UK. It is late autumn. They look up at their new home. It is quiet except for the sounds of the city; Big Ben, dogs barking, Dr Who on TV coming from THE NEIGHBOUR's room.*

*V/O (in English and Arabic):*

*Night 241.*

*THE FATHER takes out his mobile.*

THE FATHER:

*Our new home. Let's let your mother know that we've arrived.*

*THE FATHER speed dials, gives SHAHRAZAD his mobile. The sound of an international ring tone. It rings and rings and rings.*

SHAHRAZAD:

She's not answering.

THE FATHER:

It's late there now. She's probably asleep. We'll try again in the morning. Come on.

*More leaves fall. THE FATHER and SHAHRAZAD exit, walk upstairs to their new flat. THE NEIGHBOUR appears in her window and sees the new arrivals. They appear in the kitchen, lit by a bare energy saving light bulb. THE FATHER arranges items in the kitchen and then puts SHAHRAZAD to bed in her bedroom (also lit by a bare energy saving light bulb). When SHAHRAZAD is in bed...*

SHAHRAZAD:

Dad, tell me the story of Abu Hasan.

THE FATHER:

No more stories Shahrazad.

*He switches off her light, moves back to the kitchen and calls his wife... there is no answer. He switches off the light. SHAHRAZAD opens her book, light spills out and she reads as the night passes.*

SHAHRAZAD:

As she wept she lay down and fell asleep until night came. It so happened that this place was haunted by a demon and when the demon came out and was about to fly away, he saw the girl and was startled and amazed by her beauty.

*As she reads she falls asleep and the voiceover takes over.*

THE MOTHER V/O:

So he picked her up and he flew with her up in the air. Flying across strange countries, two angels by chance spied the demon and shot him with stars. The demon burst was consumed by fire but the girl was saved by the angels who carried her gently to the earth. Below was a city and they left her there and departed.

#### 4. A NEW HOME

*It's the morning. Snow falls. THE NEIGHBOUR leaves for school up the pathway on a scooter. THE FATHER is in the kitchen writing a note. During the V/O he puts on his coat, leaves the flat and sets off down the pathway.*

THE MOTHER V/O:

*When the day dawned, the city gate opened and the people came out and, seeing the beautiful girl each person offered an opinion of how she had come to be there. Their discussion awakened the girl, "Good people, where am I?" They replied, "We found you lying here. Where did you sleep last night?" She replied "I slept in Damascus" One of them said, "Give her a hard kick!" Another said, "You're mad; how can you sleep in Damascus last night and wake up here?"*

*SHAHRAZAD wakes up. Peering out of her bedroom window she sees her father leaving. She runs into the kitchen, sees the note he has left, and runs after him up the pathway. He has gone.*

*It's snowing. SHAHRAZAD has never seen snow before. She tries to catch some in her mouth. She has her book. She always has her book. It is a security blanket.*

SHAHRAZAD: *to the audience*  
Good people, where am I?

*She hears the growl of a demon coming from the grate on the roof. It grabs her attention, 'are there demons here?'*

*A school bell rings. Suddenly THE NEIGHBOUR appears on the pathway on her scooter. A snowball is thrown it hits her on the back of her head and she falls off her scooter. She puts her hand to her head feels the wet. It's all in her hood and down her back. We hear the laughter of children.*

THE NEIGHBOUR: *(shouting at the taunting children)*  
Leave me alone!

*SHAHRAZAD and THE NEIGHBOUR look at each other. THE NEIGHBOUR runs away up the pathway and onto the rooftop. SHAHRAZAD follows. THE NEIGHBOUR empties her hood of snow.*

*Compelled to comfort THE NEIGHBOUR, SHAHRAZAD tells the story of the Envied and the Envious.*

SHAHRAZAD:  
Once there lived two men: 'The Envied and The Envious'.

*They don't speak the same language. THE NEIGHBOUR doesn't understand SHAHRAZAD but she continues the story using whatever means to make the story clear.*

The Envied and The Envious.

THE NEIGHBOUR:

I don't understand what you're saying.

SHAHRAZAD:

And they lived next door to each other.

The Envied had a good heart. The Envious was filled with hate

*She mimes envy...*

and he wanted everything that The Envied had.

One day, The Envied was minding his own business, when The Envious came and threw a snow ball at him.

*SHAHRAZAD takes the scooter and re-enacts what happened to THE NEIGHBOUR.*

The Envied had had enough and he cried out "By God, because of him, I will even depart from this world".

So he travelled.

*SHAHRAZAD invites THE NEIGHBOUR onto her scooter to travel. They do. There are echoes of THE FATHER's journeying in the story of 'How Abu Hasan Broke Wind' and of their own flight into exile.*

He travelled, to a new land and there he settled and devoted himself to the study of God.

*She kneels down.*

He prayed every single day.

*SHAHRAZAD pulls THE NEIGHBOUR to the floor and gets her to join in with Muslim prayer. This is all very new to the Neighbour.*

In this way he became very wise and people came from everywhere to see him and to pay their respects.

*SHAHRAZAD bows down to THE NEIGHBOUR.*

One day news of The Envied's fame spread so far that it reached the ears of his envious neighbour. He was furious!

*SHAHRAZAD lays the Envious.*

So the Envious travelled to The Envied and when he saw him he said, "My friend I have some important information for you. If you would just like to follow me" And he took him away from everybody, through a deep dark forest and to the edge of a deep, dark well.

*They climb the roof.*

The Envious said, "Now, that piece of information I had to give you..."and he pushed him into the well.

*SHAHRAZAD tries to push THE NEIGHBOUR off the roof - THE NEIGHBOUR yelps.*

Come on - I will do it with you.

*She jumps off the roof to show THE NEIGHBOUR it's not too scary. Wooooooo!*

Come on!

*THE NEIGHBOUR follows first with trepidation then with fearlessness and glee.*

THE NEIGHBOUR:

*Waaaaahhhh*

SHAHRAZAD:

And he left The Envied in the well believing he had killed him. But, The Envied wasn't hurt because he was saved by a great and powerful...

*She disappears behind the central block, discovers a large sheet of plastic and rustles up demon wings.*

...DEMON!!!

*SHAHRAZAD emerges, covered in meters of discarded opaque plastic forming a demon.*

And this Demon caught the Envied and carried him down gently to a ledge.

*She cradles THE NEIGHBOUR to the block. They sit.*

The demon growled, "My friend don't worry, good fortune is coming your way. The King of this land has heard of you and tomorrow he will pay you a visit...."

*THE NEIGHBOUR is lost. The story is getting complicated and detailed.*

Wait!

*SHAHRAZAD goes to the pile of rubbish, rummages for something, she flings unwanted items away: a sofa cushion, a flat football and a box, until she finds a pan which she puts on her head. Aha! A King.*

SHAHRAZAD:  
A King.

*Puts the pan on her head like a crown.*

A King will visit you and he has a daughter...

*Holds the pan like a baby.*

...who is sick and there is only one way to cure her.

You must find the black cat...

*She puppeteers her coat as a cat.*

...with a white spot on its tail the size of a dirham, and from its tail you must pluck seven hairs, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven and you must burn them in a fire and the smoke will rise into the face of the Princess and she will become...well.

The Envied listened carefully and when the morning came he climbed out of the well...

*SHAHRAZAD pulls THE NEIGHBOUR up onto the platform.*

...and he looked for the cat...

*Increasingly THE NEIGHBOUR follows some aspects of the story and plays along, SHAHRAZAD puppets the cat*

...and plucked out seven hairs from its tail and he put them in his pocket.

Meanwhile the King arrived. As soon as The Envied saw him, he knew what to do. He said, "Follow me" and he took out the hairs from his pocket, put them into the fire and the smoke rose into the face of the Princess, and she became... well.

The King was so grateful that he bowed down to The Envied and made him his Vizier and gave him robes of great honour.

*SHAHRAZAD gives THE NEIGHBOUR her coat as robes.*

Many years later when the King became sick (*she coughs*) and died (*she dies a death reminiscent of her father's protracted death in 'How Abu Hasan Broke Wind'*) everyone asked, "Who shall we make King?" and the answer was clear...

*SHAHRAZAD crowns THE NEIGHBOUR with the pan. We hear the applause and cheers of the crowds.*

The Envied was now King and much loved by the people.

One day as he was strolling through his Kingdom, who should he spot but his envious neighbour; looking poor and dirty at the side of the road. Now, he could have killed him.

*SHAHRAZAD raises a gun, and Neighbour copies, a little too enthusiastically.*

No! He didn't. Instead, he gave him gifts.

*SHAHRAZAD hands the pan to THE NEIGHBOUR to offer The Envied as a gift, but neighbour thinks she means hit The Envious with it.*

No!

*SHAHRAZAD makes Neighbour give the pan as a gift.*

He forgave him, because without this man, The Envied would not have studied, become wise, and become King. Wait...

*SHAHRAZAD picks up the residue of the snowball and throws it at herself.*

Look. If somebody throws a snowball at me, it doesn't matter, I don't care!

I don't care!

*SHAHRAZAD comes back to the book, opens it and shows THE NEIGHBOUR the story and pictures of The Envied and The Envious.*

SHAHRAZAD:

Look... 'The Envied and The Envious'.

*THE NEIGHBOUR takes the book, looks at the writing, she has never seen Arabic before it has an effect on her, a magical effect.*

*A photograph falls out of the pages. THE NEIGHBOUR picks up the picture.*

THE NEIGHBOUR:

That's you. That's your dad? I saw you both the other night.

*SHAHRAZAD doesn't understand.*

SHAHRAZAD:

That is my Dad.

Neighbour:

Is this your Mum?

SHAHRAZAD:

That is my Mum. She's not here. She's at home.

*THE NEIGHBOUR doesn't understand.*

Not here.

*THE NEIGHBOUR understands. She grabs the plastic and makes a demon, like SHAHRAZAD did during the story of 'The Envied and The Envious'. She becomes the demon.*

THE NEIGHBOUR:

Come on!

*SHAHRAZAD joins in. They make a double demon.*

*THE FATHER returns, walking up the pathway. He's carrying a Primark bag. He can hear the girls above him. He looks up. He can't see them. He continues on to the flat.*

*Climbing the grill the girls continue to play, a huge gush of air is released, the plastic they are playing with inflates and blows up above them. SHAHRAZAD is scared, THE NEIGHBOUR plays with the plastic in the rushing air until it dies down.*

SHAHRAZAD: *approaching the grill.*

A demon. A demon!

Hello demon!

THE NEIGHBOUR:

You're mental.

No, Tuesday seven o'clock.

Tuesday seven o'clock.

*She takes out her mobile and points to it.*

That happens every Tuesday at seven o'clock.

*SHAHRAZAD seems to understand. They look at each other.*

SHAHRAZAD: *(pointing to herself)*

Shahrazad.

THE NEIGHBOUR: *(pointing to herself)*

Fred.

*A moment of real contact.*

*THE FATHER appears in the flat. He can't find SHAHRAZAD. He looks out of the window. She's below. He doesn't seem pleased that SHAHRAZAD is out.*

Father:

Shahrazad!

*SHAHRAZAD leaves. THE NEIGHBOUR touched by the game they played, picks up the plastic and growls like a demon. She leaves the roof. Through the kitchen window we see SHAHRAZAD return. THE FATHER shows SHAHRAZAD what he has bought. It is a school uniform. SHAHRAZAD takes the uniform into her room. She hold it up to herself. Time passes.*

*Projection and V/O Night 242, Night 243, Night 245, Night 246, 247, 248, ending on Night 249 . SHAHRAZAD slowly changes imperceptibly into a school uniform as the lights fade on her.*

*The ring of a school bell and the noise of children.*

## 5. THE THREE PRINCES

*It's late afternoon of a new day. THE NEIGHBOUR returns as usual on her scooter but she hides and waits for SHAHRAZAD. SHAHRAZAD arrives back. SHAHRAZAD had a terrible first day at school, she's also reticent to go into her flat. She winds herself up onto the roof. THE NEIGHBOUR follows.*

THE NEIGHBOUR:

I saw you at school.

*She points to her uniform and at SHAHRAZAD's.*

School?

SHAHRAZAD: *To the audience.*

I don't understand what anyone is saying even though the students and teachers are friendly, I can tell they're nice by their facial expressions, like her, but not understanding what anyone is saying is really frightening. And all I know to say is the word 'Yes'.

THE NEIGHBOUR:*She grabs onto the only word she understand.*

Yes? You can speak English!

*THE NEIGHBOUR bounds up to SHAHRAZAD.*

SHAHRAZAD:*Not understanding and saying the only thing she knows.*

Yes.

*THE NEIGHBOUR reaches into her backpack and gives SHAHRAZAD a bit of left over sandwich wrapped in foil. SHAHRAZAD opens the sandwich.*

THE NEIGHBOUR:

It's ham and cheese.

*SHAHRAZAD's not convinced. She doesn't eat pork.*

*THE NEIGHBOUR takes out an apple and offers her that instead. SHAHRAZAD smiles, it's the healing apple from 'The Story of the Three Princes,' she smells the apple and a feeling of potential magic descends.*

*She offers THE NEIGHBOUR a smell of the apple. THE NEIGHBOUR goes to take a bite.*

SHAHRAZAD:

No! You mustn't eat it.

Look, there were once three Princes. The Prince Hussein

*THE NEIGHBOUR looks perturbed as SHAHRAZAD starts to go into full storytelling mode: she tries to differentiate the three princes, first with a beard gesture,*

*...the Prince Ali...*

*Gesture of a keen soldier. Ha! And the Prince Ahmed.*

*Gestures dreamy sigh of a romantic hero.*

Wow!

They lived with their father, the King...

*Puts on the pan as crown, of course! THE NEIGHBOUR knows what that means.*

*...and their cousin, the Princess Nouronihar....*

*SHAHRAZAD looks for suitable prop for a tiara. She places it on THE NEIGHBOUR's head casting her in the role of the princess.*

*...who grew up to be so beautiful and so wise, all three brothers, fell madly in love with her.*

*She shows all three brothers 'in love' in their distinctly different ways.*

So their father had to talk to them and said, "One princess cannot be the wife of three persons. She can only marry one of you, or I will marry her to a foreign prince!" But none of the princess would agree who would marry the princess, so the King had to come up with a plan:

"Each of you must travel separately to different countries and bring me back the best gift you can find. The person who brings back the rarest curiosity will marry the Princess!"

The brothers obeyed and they set off. They travelled out of the city on horseback.

*SHAHRAZAD leads THE NEIGHBOUR on a journey. She grabs the neighbour onto a horse, puts the neighbours arms round her and gallops off.*

Reaching a place where the road split into three, there the brothers agreed to travel separately and to meet back in one year's time.

Prince Hussein set off first, towards India.

*The girls run forward to a cliff top edge. We hear the sound of strong winds on a mountain ledge.*

He travelled over barren mountains

*She mimes edging along a ravine. THE NEIGHBOUR joins in.*

*We hear the sounds of a desert.*

SHAHRAZAD:

...and through parched deserts,

*She mimes walking through a desert sand storm. Shows her thirst to THE NEIGHBOUR to give a strong clue of where they are, she joins in. Then we hear...birdcall and the atmosphere of a rainforest.*

SHAHRAZAD:

...and even through lush and beautiful rain-forests.

*SHAHRAZAD catches an imaginary flying creature in her hands and offering it to THE NEIGHBOUR she reveals a baby dinosaur that squawks in THE NEIGHBOUR's face. Delighted SHAHRAZAD pulls THE NEIGHBOUR onto the block.*

SHAHRAZAD:

Until finally he reached a hilltop, overlooking the city of Bisnagar. A beautiful place with a palace in the centre, surrounded by markets.

*SHAHRAZAD shows the first market – in each market SHAHRAZAD conjures up the wares for THE NEIGHBOUR to experience, it is all incredibly exotic for the English girl.*

Markets selling food so delicious it would make your mouth water, (*journeying through to the second market*), clothes painted in the brightest colours, with men, landscapes, trees and flowers, (*journeying through to the third market*) and there were goldsmiths' shops selling necklaces so long they reached the ground. After a day of searching through the streets, Prince Hussein had found nothing for his father, so he stopped to rest. But no sooner had he sat, when he heard the voice of a crier:

"Thirty purses, thirty purses..."

*SHAHRAZAD searches through the rubbish to find an object that could represent a carpet, it's a mop*

...buy this carpet for thirty purses of gold!"

Prince Hussein said, "Are you not mad?" and asked to see the carpet, because he could not understand how this old and dusty rug could be worth so much.

And the crier replied, "My friend, whoever sits on this carpet will fly in an instant to wherever he wishes to go. If you don't believe me, judge for yourself." (*She spreads the carpet – puts the mop on the floor in front of the marking the edge of the carpet.*) "Get on."

*SHAHRAZAD pulls THE NEIGHBOUR onto the carpet.*

So the two of them stepped on, and as soon as Prince Hussein thought of somewhere, the carpet began... to rise.

*The carpet rises, she manipulates the mop so that it is the edge of the carpet rising. It flew over the rooftops of the city, (and they do) until it landed on the hilltop where Prince Hussain had been that very morning.*

He cried out "This is sure to win the hand of the Princess". So he struck a deal and paid the crier thirty purses of gold. Now, with his magic carpet he could travel wherever he wanted to go, and with time to spare Prince Hussein decided to visit the world.

He flew over the pyramids of Egypt...

*They fly up and over the pyramids of Egypt*

...along the Great Wall of China...

*They swoop along the Great Wall of China.*

...across to Europe and over the city of Paris...

*They fly over Paris, peering over carpet at the beautiful city with wonder*

...until one day he reached an island called Britain.

*They swoop over the Channel and stop. It rains.*

Which he didn't like it very much. It was cold and grey, and it rained all the time and the food was horrible.

Now Prince Hussein might have travelled further, but the time had come to see his brothers again. So he flew back (*they fly back in rewind, fast*) and he rolled up his carpet, and waited for them.

Meanwhile Prince Ali travelled to Persia, to the city of Shiraz - the busiest city in the world.

*SHAHRAZAD guides THE NEIGHBOUR around the city.*

Everywhere he went there were people bumping into him, and pushing him and poking him and tickling him, and there were children running about his feet, and market sellers everywhere saying, "Buy this!" "Two for one!" "Special offer today!"

And after a day of being whirled around like this, oh mind that donkey, Prince Ali was exhausted. So he found a quiet spot and sat to rest, but no sooner had he sat, when he heard the voice of a crier shouting "30 purses, 30 purses..."

*She finds an object to represent the telescope – a plastic tube the kind used for plumbing.*

Buy this tube for thirty purses of gold!"

And Prince Ali said, "Are you not mad? You cannot sell this worthless tube for thirty purses!"

"My friend, whoever looks through this tube will see whatever he wishes to see, no matter how far away it is. If you don't believe me, judge for yourself. Look"

So the prince looked through wishing to see the Princess Nouronihar...

*SHAHRAZAD looks through at THE NEIGHBOUR*

...and there she stood, smiling, laughing, and looking beautiful as ever.

Prince Ali exclaimed "This is sure to win the hand of the Princess," so he struck a deal, and paid the crier thirty purses of gold, and travelled back to the meeting place, where Prince Hussein was waiting for him.

Now, for Prince Ahmed! He travelled towards Samarkand, and no sooner had he arrived there when he heard the voice of a crier shouting:

Thirty purses, thirty purses, buy this...

*She returns to THE NEIGHBOUR's apple*

...apple for thirty purses of gold."

"Are you not mad? What is so special about this apple?" asked Prince Ahmed.

"Ah my friend" said, the crier "This apple is a great treasure. It can cure a sick person of any illness and even if they're dying. All they have to do, is smell it."

*SHAHRAZAD hands the apple to THE NEIGHBOUR, the apple that THE NEIGHBOUR gave SHAHRAZAD at the beginning, she smells it, understands that it is magic and puts her hand out to strike a deal.*

Yes! "This is sure to win the hand of the Princess" so Prince Ahmed struck a deal, paid the crier thirty purses of gold and travelled back.

*They shake hands.*

When the three brothers saw each other they embraced, and showed off their gifts.

*We see THE FATHER appear in the kitchen. He turns on a radio. He's listening to a short wave radio broadcast in his own language. It is a news report. Not good news. SHAHRAZAD hears the radio. She's keen to finish the story before she's called back by her Father.*

Prince Hussein spread the magic carpet and Prince Ali showed his tube, the princes looked through the tube and there they saw the Princess Nouronihar - but this time, she was not smiling and laughing because she was dying.

*SHAHRAZAD gestures being ill. THE NEIGHBOUR 'cottons on' to 'dying, and offers the apple. She's really getting it now.*

Yes! and Prince Ahmed immediately stepped forward with the apple and said, "Brothers, do not fear, this apple can cure a sick person even if they're dying. We must save the princess."

"Then let us waste no time!" cried Hussein, and all three jumped onto the carpet, wishing the same wish, flew back to the palace (*they fly back on the carpet*) and into the Princess' chamber, where she lay, close to death.

*SHAHRAZAD makes THE NEIGHBOUR play the dying Princess. She enjoys this a little too much!*

Yes - close to death. The Prince put the apple underneath her nose...

THE FATHER: Calling from the window.  
Shahrazad. Shahrazad!

*SHAHRAZAD stops playing, picks up her book and makes to leave.*

THE NEIGHBOUR:  
But what happens next?

SHAHRAZAD:

Tomorrow I shall tell you something stranger and more amazing.

THE NEIGHBOUR:

But who do I marry?

*SHAHRAZAD returns to the flat. She tries to give her Father the apple. He takes it but leaves it on the windowsill. SHAHRAZAD goes to her room. THE FATHER tries to call his wife. He hears a dead tone.*

*THE NEIGHBOUR steals the mop that was used for flying. She creeps back to the flat and practices flying in her bedroom.*

## 6. THE FATHER'S LAMENT

V/O: Night 250

*SHAHRAZAD goes to bed. In the kitchen THE FATHER takes his instrument out and plays a lament.*

*SHAHRAZAD looks out of the window. She opens her book.*

THE MOTHER V/O:

The widower had, from the day of his wife's disappearance, given himself up to weeping, day and night, day and night and after a long time went by, he made a tomb for her in the middle of his palace and continued to weep there, day and night. Day and night. Kneeling down by the tomb he would lament his missing wife, weeping day and night. Day and night.

*We move to night.*

V/O Night:

253, 254, 255, 266.

*SHAHRAZAD comes out and reads her book on the platform.*

## 7. CINDERELLA

V/O:

Night 277

*It's Christmas. Christmas lights flash around THE NEIGHBOUR's window. The sound of the TV and Christmas songs.*

*THE NEIGHBOUR joins SHAHRAZAD on the roof. She's sad to see SHAHRAZAD on her own.*

THE NEIGHBOUR:

This is for you.

SHAHRAZAD:

Is this for me?

*THE NEIGHBOUR gives SHAHRAZAD a present. SHAHRAZAD opens it. It is a collection of stories by the Brother's Grimm. SHAHRAZAD is excited to have a new book. She wants to show her appreciation. She tries to read but it's difficult, although SHAHRAZAD's English is marginally better now.*

SHAHRAZAD:

Kin...der..r...

THE NEIGHBOUR:

Cinderella.

SHAHRAZAD:

Cind-er-ella. A ree...ch maa...n

THE NEIGHBOUR:

A rich man's wife...hold on.

*THE NEIGHBOUR searches in the rubbish for her 'props'. She finds some carrier bags, a cheese grater, a piece of metal, a twig. She's pleased with the selection. It's her turn to tell a story!*

A woman, she got sick (coughs). I mean really sick (exaggerated cough).

And she had a daughter (points to SHAHRAZAD). And she said, to her daughter, "When I go to heaven, stay good in your heart and I will look on you and protect you." And then she died (gruesome death noises). "Why!!"

So the daughter went to her mother's grave and she prayed and cried. And the next day she came and she prayed and cried and everyday she came and prayed and cried. Until, one day...

Her Dad (*Dad gesture*) came home with a new wife (*step-mother-hair bouncing*) who had two daughters (*animates two blue carrier bags*) who were beautiful but on the inside they were mean and evil and horrid and cruel. They would laugh at their step-sister:

"Ha ha ha. Loner. She's got no mates!"

"Ha ha ha. Weirdo, with her hand me down clothes!"

And at night, they would sleep in their cosy but their sister had to sleep on her own on the rock hard floor, close to the fire.

And because she was so dusty and dirty they called her Cinderella.

One day, the Dad (*imitates Dad*) was going on a business trip and he said, "Would you like me to bring you back any souvenir? "

"I want more make up!" "I need an i-phone!"

But Cinderella just asked for a twig. And when her Dad returned he gave, make up, i-phone, twig! Cinderella planted it by her Mother's grave, closed her eyes and when she opened them there grew a beautiful tree. And on the tree there was a magical white bird (*show bird flying down*) that threw down to Cinderella anything she wished for.

Then, one day, the Prince (*imitate Prince with saucepan*) was looking for a wife (*imitate love interest*) and everyone was invited to his party (*step-sisters scream in excitement*).

Cinderella begged her step-mum to let her go:

"Err no, Cinderella, you can't go. You have no clothes. You can't dance. We would be ashamed of you".

So they left without her.

But Cinderella went to her mum's grave and wished for something to wear. And the little white bird threw down to her the most magnificent silver dress! (*She wraps SHAHRAZAD in plastic sheet*)

So she rushed to the palace (*forces SHAHRAZAD across the stage*) and when everyone saw Cinderella...

"Wow!"

"Who is she?"

"She's really hot!"

*We hear party music.*

And the Prince saw her and danced with her all night...

*THE NEIGHBOUR dances at SHAHRAZAD who is still, tangled in the plastic.*

But it got too late and Cinderella had to run away and the Prince was like "Noooooooo!" but it was ok because she dropped her shoe.

Give me your shoe!

*She doesn't understand so THE NEIGHBOUR pulls off SHAHRAZAD's shoe.*

"I will only marry the person who fits this shoe!"

So he went to her house (*imitates knocking on door, step-mother opening door and screaming in excitement. It has all got a bit chaotic.*)

"The Prince is here! Quickly girls! Put on the shoe!"

So the first sister tried it on. But her toe didn't fit (*imitates toe not fitting in shoe*).

"Then cut off your toe!" (*gruesome cutting noise*).

But the Prince saw the blood. Then the other sister tried it on, but her heel didn't fit (*imitates heel not fitting in shoe*).

"Then cut off your heel!" (*gruesome cutting noise*).

But the Prince saw the blood.

And then Cinderella tried it and it fitted so they got married but the step-sisters were jealous of her, like 'The Envied and the Envious', but they did get punished, by the magical white bird who came and plucked out their eyes.

*The bird attacks the stepsisters.*

Ka Ka Ka! "My eyes my beautiful eyes, how will I see who's texted me!"

*SHAHRAZAD looks at the book tries to read the text. THE NEIGHBOUR starts to teach her the words. She relishes teaching SHAHRAZAD the bloody words.*

THE NEIGHBOUR:

See...plucked out there eyes... plucked...

SHAHRAZAD:

Plucked..

THE NEIGHBOUR:

The prince saw the blood.

SHAHRAZAD:

The prince saw the blood.

## 8. FLYING BOOKS

*SHAHRAZAD gives THE NEIGHBOUR her book. They both read each other's books, as they read they mimic each other's actions, the actions grow and they play call-and-respond: the books becoming birds, monsters, roofs. This turns into a dance, a dance of books. A glitter ball turns.*

V/O:

Night 321, 399, 443, 476, 572, 645, 673, and 721

*The sounds of spring. They are at the grave of Cinderella's mother which they have made from a twig and daffodils. SHAHRAZAD knows the story now off-by-heart.*

SHAHRAZAD:

As they passed by the hazel tree where her mother was buried, the two white birds cried out:

Rook di goo, rook di goo!  
No blood's in the shoe.  
The shoe's not too tight,  
This bride is right!

*SHAHRAZAD goes to Cinderella's mother's grave. She arranges it. It could be her mother's grave.*

## 9. REMEMBERING HOME/THE FISHERMAN AND THE DEMON

THE NEIGHBOUR:

What's it like where you're from?

SHAHRAZAD:

The streets are full of people selling delicious food, but sometimes it has flies on it. The houses aren't as rich as here, but we were very happy.

THE NEIGHBOUR:

Why did you leave?

SHAHRAZAD:

The war. I don't know why it started, there was fighting and it got worse and the good areas were bombed, like where we lived. Everywhere people were running and was moving, moving. My dad decided that we had to go to Europe. We had to run away. My mum couldn't come because she didn't have a passport.

My Mum...we don't know where she is... if something has happened. Sometimes I have nightmares that my mum picks me up from school, but when I open my eyes I realise it wasn't real.

*An alarm on THE NEIGHBOUR's phone goes off. She looks at it.*

THE NEIGHBOUR:

It's five to seven.

*Time for them to re-enact a story from The One Thousand and One Nights that has been taught to THE NEIGHBOUR by SHAHRAZAD. At first THE NEIGHBOUR is a little nervous. SHAHRAZAD guides her when necessary. They have made this story together before using rubbish from the pile. SHAHRAZAD gets up to start the play.*

There was once a very old fisherman who had a wife and three daughters/

SHAHRAZAD: *She corrects her.*

/Two Daughters/

THE NEIGHBOUR:

/Two daughters and he was so poor that he did not have enough money for food. One day, whilst the moon was still up, he went to the sea to fish. He set down his basket, rolled up his shirt and waded up to his waist in the water. Then he cast his net, waited for it to sink; then he gathered in the net and he started to pull. (SHAHRAZAD brings a chair as the catch.) The net was heavy and he was very pleased. When he managed to pull net ashore and opened it, he found inside a dead donkey, all torn apart...

*They reach into the donkey's guts; they love this especially SHAHRAZAD.*

THE NEIGHBOUR:

Gross!

SHAHRAZAD:

GROSS!

THE NEIGHBOUR:

That's enough.

*With growing confidence.*

The fisherman was very disappointed. He wept at this great injustice and called upon Almighty God to help him for he would only cast one more time. He waded back into the sea. Then he cast his net, waited, gathered, and pulled but this time the net was stuck. So he took off his clothes and dove into the sea.

*She does a slow motion dive into the water to free the net. SHAHRAZAD brings a box as the brass jar and they place it on the grill.*

And when he hauled it to the shore, and opened it net he found a long-necked brass jar, with a stopper in it. He was very pleased with this as he could sell it in the copper market for it must be worth at least two bowls of wheat.

*Looks at her phone; any second now. She increases speed.*

He tried to move the jar, but it was so full and so heavy, he couldn't. Looking at the stopper, he said, to himself "I will open the jar, shake out the contents, and then roll it to the market". So he took out his knife (*grabs spatula*) and began to scrape and struggle with the stopper until finally he pried it open! (*Pop*)

*They're waiting for the gush of air from the grill to go off (it's Tuesday evening)! And are disappointed when nothing happens.*

*Seconds later, the grill fires up and large expanse of plastic that they stage managed into the box begins to rise and create a demon a ten-foot inflatable demon. Thrilled, THE NEIGHBOUR and SHAHRAZAD jump onto the grill and speak from under the plastic.*

There began to emerge from the jar a great column of smoke, which rose to the sky and spread over the face of the earth, so much that it covered the sea and reached the clouds and hid the daylight. Suddenly there stood a demon, with his feet on the ground and his head in the clouds!

SHAHRAZAD:

He had a head like a tomb!/  
/and fangs like pincers!/  
/and a mouth like a cave!/  
/and teeth like stones!

THE NEIGHBOUR:

THE NEIGHBOUR:

THE NEIGHBOUR:

THE NEIGHBOUR:

THE NEIGHBOUR:

THE NEIGHBOUR:

*SHAHRAZAD hears her father playing his instrument.*

SHAHRAZAD:

I have to get back. *And she dashes off back to the flat.*

THE NEIGHBOUR:

Come on finish the story with me! You always run off at the best bit!

SHAHRAZAD:

He'll 'wallop' (a word she has learnt from *THE NEIGHBOUR*) me if I don't get back. Tomorrow night I shall tell you something stranger and more amazing if he doesn't kill me. *She winks.*

THE NEIGHBOUR:

Fine then.

*She looks around, not knowing what to do, feeling in need to finish the story. The audience will 'do'. She drapes the plastic over herself.*

Then the Demon said, "Make a wish!"

And the fisherman replied, "What shall I wish of you?"

"Make a wish, how you wish... to die!"

"But why should I die? I just freed you."

"Because I have been trapped in that jar for two thousand million years and I'm a bit angered!"

"But you're so huge; I don't believe you could fit in that jar!"

"Fine, I will show you,"

*She crumples the plastic and herself into the box, trying her best to close it shut.*

Then the demon got into the jar but the fisherman quickly clamped on the stopper and trapped him in the jar for the rest of eternity...

*A few moments later, she awkwardly comes out of the box and leaves.*

## 10. NO MORE STORIES

*SHAHRAZAD enters the flat. THE FATHER is playing a lament on his instrument.*

SHAHRAZAD:

Dad, tell me the story of Abu Hasan.

*He continues to play, she persists.*

In the city of Baghdad there lived a man called Abu Hassan, he was a very successful merchant...

*He won't stop playing his instrument. She goes to her room. Puts the book down, for the first time.*

V/O:

Night 757,

THE MOTHER V/O:

Love, if our parting longer lasts,  
My heart will pine and soon will waste away  
But if you bless these sad eyes with your sight  
The day we meet will be a blessed day.

*The nights pass.*

## 11. WAITING FOR SHAHRAZAD

*THE NEIGHBOUR appears, climbs onto the platform, she goes to the grill. Looks at her phone. It's a Tuesday just before 7 o'clock, SHAHRAZAD doesn't come any more. The grill fires up a little, it's a pathetic demon, she puts a plastic bag on it and watches it fly limply. The bag falls, she leaves.*

V/O:

Night 853

*THE FATHER is in the kitchen. THE FATHER's mobile rings, he stops playing to answer it.*

THE FATHER:

Hello.

*Blackout on THE FATHER in the flat. The sound of the accordion continues (as a recording).*

V/O:  
Night 864, 887, 923, 956, 987

## 12. THE FATHER'S STORY

*SHAHRAZAD appears on the roof, she hides in front of the concrete block. She can't bare to go back to the flat. THE FATHER arrives with a plastic bag with some take away food. He knows SHAHRAZAD is there.*

THE FATHER:

Once there were two men, The Envied and The Envious and they were brothers.

*She pops here head out. She's annoyed that he's not telling the story properly. They were not brothers.*

Yes, they were brothers and The Envious was full of hatred for his brother because he saw that he was cooler than him...and had way more friends...and was better at PE.

SHAHRAZAD:

No!

THE FATHER:

He was! He was brilliant at netball.

One day the intensity of his hatred reached such a pitch that he lured his brother to the side of a well and he pushed him in. And he fell down, and down but he was caught in the air by a demon who lowered him gently to the ground. There the demon said, "My friend your luck is about to change. Tomorrow morning you will be visited by a queen."

SHAHRAZAD:

No Dad. A King!

THE FATHER:

By a Queen, the Queen of England! And she has a sick daughter and you are going to cure her by finding a black cat and pulling seven hairs from its tale, and throwing the hairs into the fire and wafting the smoke into the face of the princess.

The next morning along came the Queen of England and she said, "My good man, is there anything you can do to save my poor sick daughter?"

The Envied said, "Er ye...s, I thi...thi...think so, er, er, your Majesty."

But he was so overwhelmed by meeting the Queen of England that he got few things muddled up. He grabbed one of the Queen's corgis (*woof*) and pulled off its tale completely and set fire to it and hit the princess over the head with it. And she was cured instantly. The queen said,

"Is there anything I can do to repay you?"

And The Envied said, "Yes you can let me marry the princess!"

And the queen agreed. So there was a huge, grand extravagant wedding, in Westminster Abbey and the bride was presented in her three different wedding dresses. Right in the middle of the ceremony, as The Envied prostrated himself at his bride's feet, he let out a fart so enormous (*farts*) so tremendous (*farts*) so terrifyingly powerful that it shot him up in the air like a rocket and blasted him through the roof of Westminster Abbey and out over London. He farted his way across the sky, over the Gherkin, around the Shard and out into the countryside; until he finally came to rest outside his brother's house (*lands fart*).

His brother was overjoyed to see him because he thought he had died when he pushed him down the well. Ever since then he'd been racked with guilt. He said, to his brother "I'm sorry for the way I treated you and I hope you can forgive me."

And he threw a fabulous feast in honour of his brothers return. There were rices of five different colours, sherbets of as many more and steak and kidney pie, fish and chips, roast beef and pickled onions; good British food. As they ate The Envied recounted his story of how he'd been saved by the demon, met the Queen of England, cured the princess and farted his way all the way home. His brother said, "That is truly an extraordinary story, but I know a story which is stranger still, a story that will make even stone weep."

There was once a Vizier who lived with his daughter in a flat in a country far, far, far far away from their homeland. They had fled a war, leaving the girl's mother behind. Every day the Vizier went to work to pay for: the rent on the flat and food and clothes for his daughter.

One day on his way home from work, he happened to spot through the window of a restaurant, a cook, who looked like they might be from the same country as himself. So he stepped inside to enquire. There he discovered that not only was she from the same country as him, but also from the same city, and the two of them talked for a long time in their own language.

The cook made him a beautiful dish of pomegranate seeds and almonds, sweetened with rose water. The Vizier told the cook how his wife made the same dish; only when she made it, it was even more delicious because she added just a touch of pepper.

The cook told the Vizier she was about to visit their home country for the first time in many years and the two of them agreed to meet again when she returned.

So for a time the Vizier continued with his repetitive work, he became sadder and more withdrawn with every day that passed. He could no longer find it in his heart to

share stories with his daughter. Until one day he received a call from the cook who had returned from her journey and she brought good news and a gift. The Vizier was excited and ran to the restaurant as fast as he could. And he said, 'What is this news?' And the cook replied, "Ah, first the gift" and she presented the Vizier with what appeared to be the same pomegranate and almond dish as before.

*THE FATHER passes the takeaway food to SHAHRAZAD*

Only this time when the Vizier tasted it he felt upon his tongue the faintest zing of pepper.

*SHAHRAZAD tries the dish. It tastes very familiar. THE FATHER makes to leave...*

SHAHRAZAD:

Wait! What happens next?

THE FATHER:

Tomorrow. Tomorrow I'll tell you something stranger and even more amazing.

*THE FATHER leaves, he has purposefully left his mobile phone in the plastic bag. It rings. SHAHRAZAD looks for her father, then takes out the phone and answers it.*

SHAHRAZAD:

Hello.

*We hear her MOTHER on the phone.*

THE MOTHER:

Did you taste it?

SHAHRAZAD:

Mum?

THE MOTHER:

What does it remind you of?

SHAHRAZAD:

Home.

*THE MOTHER and THE FATHER appear in the kitchen window behind SHAHRAZAD.*

THE MOTHER:

'Prince Ali looked through the tube, wishing at the same time to see the King, his father'....

What happens next?

SHAHRAZAD:

He saw the king, his father laughing amongst his servants.

THE MOTHER:

Do you have it?

SHAHRAZAD:

The tube? Wait. Yes.

THE MOTHER:

Look through it and wish for what you would most like to see.

*SHAHRAZAD looks through the telescope. She looks around. SHAHRAZAD sees them.*

SHAHRAZAD:

MUM!

*She rushes off the roof and up into the flat.*

*In the flat THE MOTHER and SHAHRAZAD embrace. THE FATHER joins them.*

V/O:

Night 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999

*At the same time.*

THE MOTHER V/O:

When she saw her daughter she threw herself at her and wept bitterly. She told her how she had endured after their departure, and the daughter told her how she had suffered, and they thanked God for their reunion. Thereafter, the Vizier, his wife and his daughter lived the best of lives in prosperity and ease, eating and drinking and enjoying themselves to the end of their days.

V/O:

Night 1000, Night 1001, Night 1002, Night 1003, Night 1004, Night 1005...

*On and on into eternity. Book leaves fall from the sky.*