

HODJA NASREDDIN, the Cunning

Hodja Nasreddin and rest of cast: turbans or veils.

Camel: two adults with camel mask, reins. Drape brown cloth over front of camel person 1 to cover arms and torso and cut hole for head. Camel person 2 bends over; cut cloth to cover them. Pin/belt in place. Loop reins around neck in front of camel.

Use leftover cloth to make turbans and veils for Hodja and the crowd.

River: blue organza strip.

Crowd mills about to the sides of centre stage; in centre, behind the wings, the tax collector is tangled in blue organza – drowning in the river. Hodja is to the side, attempting to nap.

CROWD ONE (*pointing*): Look, look, the tax collector of Aksehir has fallen into the river. He's drowning! Allah be merciful!

CROWD: Let him drown! Save him! Let him drown! Save him!

CROWD: (*extending hands*): **Give** us your hand, **give** us your hand.

Tax Collector ignores the hand and continues to drown. Crowd One wakes Hodja.

CROWD ONE: Hodja Effendi, help us. The tax collector is drowning and he won't give us his hand.

HODJA: Let me try. (*Puts hand out*) Effendi, effendi, **take** my hand!

Tax collector immediately holds hand out and is dragged out of the water.

HODJA: You see, he is a tax collector, he is more practised in taking than giving.

Crowd heads off-stage, Hodja goes back to napping.

Neighbour enters in a hurry and salaams before the Hodja.

NEIGHBOUR: Nasreddin Hodja, blessings be upon you, we have urgent need of a camel. May we borrow yours?

HODJA: May Allah the Merciful smile upon you, my neighbour. I would gladly lend you my camel, but he is not here.

Camel makes camel noise from off-stage. Neighbour listens and is surprised and outraged.

NEIGHBOUR: Shame on you Hodja Effendi. You are caught in a lie, your camel is in the shed.

HODJA: My dear fellow, are you going to believe the word of a Hodja or are you going to believe a camel?

Neighbour stamps off.

HODJA (*getting up and calling*): Son, son? Bring our camel, we must go to the souk today.

Enters son on the camel. They start to walk. Bystander One and Two enter from opposite direction.

BYSTANDER ONE (*loudly to companion*): Look at the Hodja and his son. These are the sad times we are living in. A young boy is riding on the camel and his poor old father is sweating to keep the pace. Today's children have no respect for their parents.

Hodja stops to think, then makes his son get off the camel, and he gets on. They walk.

BYSTANDER TWO (*loudly to companion*): Look at our Hodja Effendi. He is comfortably riding on his camel and letting his little boy walk along. Shame on the Hodja for making the boy suffer like that!

Bystander One and Two exit.

Hodja stops to think. Then he gestures for the son to mount up behind him. They walk.

Bystander Three and Four enter from opposite direction.

BYSTANDER THREE: Hodja Effendi, do you know no mercy? How is this poor animal supposed to carry two people? The camel is also Allah's creation, have some pity.

Hodja stops to think. Then both he and his son get off the camel. They walk.

BYSTANDER FOUR: Hodja Effendi and his son have no minds, whatsoever. They are both beating on their feet and the camel is strolling along. Don't these people know what a camel is for?

Bystander Three and Four exit.

Hodja stops to think. Then he and his son pick up the camel and carry him off stage.

END.