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Dramatic Publishing

THE OLDEST STORY EVER TOLD

**By
DAVID F. ELIET**

**MUSIC BY
KENNETH KACMAR**

THE OLDEST STORY EVER TOLD

*This version of a classic tale was originally written for
the Perishable Theatre of New England.*

Fairy tale. By David F. Eliet. Music by Kenneth Kacmar. Cast: 2m., 2w., with doubling or up to 15 (5m., 10w.) with roles distributed. The oldest and most universal of folktales is the story of Cinderella. Versions come from almost every known culture around the world. *The Oldest Story Ever Told* combines in one telling variations on the Cinderella stories from Africa, India and China, of which the latter is the oldest. All of the beloved and familiar elements of the story are here, but with highly theatrical variations representing the different cultures. The Cinderella of the Indian tale is a boy, Changez, and instead of fairy god mothers, these Cinderellas are sided by the King of Frogs, a magic fish and a bull. Masks and puppets add theatricality to the play, while original music by Ken Kacmar enhances the production. It is highly recommended for children ages 5 to 9. *Approximate running time: 65 minutes. Music in book. Code: O79.*

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Dramatic Publishing

311 Washington St.
Woodstock, IL 60098-330
Phone: (800) 448-7469

www.dramaticpublishing.com

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**FOR THE PERISHABLE THEATRE
AND ALL WHO HAVE HELPED
TO CREATE ITS SPECIAL MAGIC**

CHARACTERS:

All the parts are meant to be played by the four actors. The playwright has suggested how the parts can be distributed, but the Director is free to assign the roles as he or she sees fit. Also, more actors can be used.

ACTRESS 1 - Yeh-Hsien, Step-Mother to Sindela, Raja

ACTRESS 2 - Sindela, Cow, Step-Mother 2 (to Yeh-Hsien)

ACTOR 1 - Changez, Old Man, Step-Daughter 1

ACTOR 2 - Step-Mother 1 (to Changez), Cow, Frog, Prince, Princess, Step-Daughter 2

TIME: Ancient

PLACE: Wherever the wind does blow

PRODUCTION NOTE: Since this play moves between Africa, India, and China, actual stage settings should be kept to a minimum. The production should rely on the imaginative use of costumes, props and found objects.

THE OLDEST STORY EVER TOLD

(The space is prepared.

The background music begins.

The ACTORS enter:

one ACTRESS is in Chinese garb,

one ACTRESS in African,

one ACTOR in Indian,

and one ACTOR in a neutral costume)

*(NOTE: Folk costumes are worn over a basic costume,
as all the ACTORS participate in each other's story.)*

(Spoken over Music)

ACTRESS 1: Once long ago in ancient China lived a girl named Yeh-Hsien whose mother had died and her father remarried.

ACTRESS 2: Once-upon-a-time in far away Africa lived Sindela, the daughter of the second wife of a rich farmer.

ACTOR 1: Once in days gone by, in the land of India, there was a boy named Changez, who watched over his step-mother's cow.

ACTOR 2 : *(Singing)*

This is the oldest story ever told

This is the oldest story ever told

In every place in every land

All around the globe

This is the oldest story ever told.

(Spoken Over Music)

ACTRESS 1: Yeh-Hsien's new mother was very kind to her, but one day her father died, and the Step-Mother began to treat her very badly.

ACTRESS 2: Then one day Sindela's mother died, and her father's first wife started treating her worse than one of the servants.

- ACTOR 1:** When Changez's father died, his step-mother started starving him to death.
- ACTOR 2:** *(Singing)*
 This is the oldest story ever told
 This is the oldest story ever told
 In every place in every land
 All around the globe
 This is the oldest story ever told
(Spoken Over Music)
- ACTRESS 1:** The Step-Mother made poor Yeh-Hsien do all the work around the house, and barely gave her enough food to live on.
- ACTRESS 2:** Sindela had to cook all the food and take care of the first wife and her two daughters as well.
- ACTOR 1:** Changez had so little to eat that he was always very weak and very tired.
- ACTOR 2:** *(Singing)*
 This is the oldest story ever told
 This is the oldest story ever told
 In every place in every land
 All around the globe
 This is the oldest story ever told.
(Spoken Over Music)
- ACTOR 1:** Every day Changez grew weaker and weaker until one day -
- COW:** *(Played by ACTOR 2)* What's wrong with you boy? Why are you so weak and tired all the time?
- CHANGEZ:** Because my step-mother won't give me enough to eat. Hardly more than a couple of crusts of moldy bread, if I'm lucky.
- COW:** In that case, twist off my right horn and shake it in a leaf.

(The Boy does so, rice comes pouring out)

CHANGEZ: Rice! *(Eating)* Good, fresh, steaming rice.

COW: When you've finished eating, put my horn back on. That way, whenever you are hungry, I will be able to feed you.

ACTRESS 2: This is the oldest story ever told
This is the oldest story ever told
In every place in every land
All around the globe
This is the oldest story ever told.

ACTRESS 1: In China this story is called Yeh-Hsien

ACTRESS 2: In Africa, Sindela

ACTOR 1: In India, The Magic Bull

ACTOR 2: By Native Americans, The Turkey Girl

ACTRESS 2: In Japan, Benizara and Kakezara

ACTOR 1: In England, Ashey Pelt

ACTRESS 1: In Moravia, Rashin Coatie

ACTOR 2: In Brazil, Dona Labismina

ACTRESS 1: In Syria, Little Red Fish

ACTRESS 2: And we all know it as CINDERELLA!

ALL: *(Singing)*
This is the oldest story ever told
This is the oldest story ever told
In every place in every land
All around the globe
This is the oldest story ever told.

In all these tales from all these lands
A boy or girl who's poor as poor can be,

ALL: Who must slave and who must toil
To care for those who have no love for them,
Must find a way to overcome
All the evil being done to them.

They weed the fields and tend the flocks
Then cook the meals and clean the crocks
They sweep the floors and mend the clothes
Then chop the wood and bake the rolls
And when their work is finally done
Long past the setting of the sun
They crawl away to fall asleep
In corners with ashes piled deep
Their eyes are full of burning tears
Their life is one of endless fears
Their bellies are empty
Their bodies sore
And all the new day brings is
More and more and more

But then a day does come along
A day to put an end to wrong
A ball or party perhaps a fair
If only they can hope to dare
To meet the challenge of this test
To give it all of their very best
With magic words or magic beasts
Or guardian spirits at the very least
The ending happy, their fate assured
If they heed the warning words
But if vows are broken
Then hope is poor
And all the new day brings is
More and more and more

This is the oldest story ever told
This is the oldest story ever told
In every place in every land
All around the globe
This is the oldest story ever told.

(ACTRESS 1 Plays the STEP-MOTHER)

STEP-MOTHER: (*Entering*) Sindela! Sindela! Where are you, you lazy, lousy, no-good, miserable excuse for a child?

SINDELA: You were calling me, Step-Mother?

STEP-MOTHER: No, I was calling the pigs. What'd'ya think? Of course I was calling you. Is there anyone else around here named "Sindela"?

SINDELA: No, Step-Mother.

STEP-MOTHER: Well, good. I'm glad we've got that straight. Now have you weeded the garden?

SINDELA: Yes, Step-Mother.

STEP-MOTHER: Have you picked the wheat, ground the meal and baked the bread?

SINDELA: Yes, Step-Mother

STEP-MOTHER: And did you wake your step-sisters and help them get dressed.

(ACTORS 1 and 2 come on as the STEP-SISTERS)

STEP-DAUGHTER 1: No, mother,

STEP-DAUGHTER 2: She did not.

STEP-MOTHER: You didn't remember to wake your sisters?

STEP-SISTERS: She didn't remember.

STEP-MOTHER: You ungrateful little wretch. How dare you?

SINDELA: Please, Step-Mother. I'm sorry. I was so busy with all my other chores, I forgot.

STEP-MOTHER: Forgot, indeed.

STEP-DAUGHTER 1: You can't fool me.

STEP-DAUGHTER 2: She didn't forget.

STEP-DAUGHTER 1: She just doesn't care.

STEP-DAUGHTER 2: She must have done it on purpose.

STEP-DAUGHTER 1: 'Cause she'd doesn't much like us.

STEP-DAUGHTERS: Just look at our hair.

STEP-DAUGHTER 1: My wrap it needs washing.

STEP-DAUGHTER 2: My stomach it needs food.

STEP-DAUGHTER 1: My bed it needs making.

STEP-DAUGHTER 2: And she just stands there staring.

STEP-DAUGHTERS: She looks like a fool.

STEP-MOTHER: Sindela, help get your sisters dressed, get their clothes washed, get their hair brushed, and get them some food.

(SINDELA rushes around and brings in some food. The SISTERS sit down to eat. SINDELA has a plate for herself.)

STEP-MOTHER: And just what do you think you are doing?

SINDELA: Having something to eat.

STEP-MOTHER: Eat? Eat? You fail to do your chores properly, and now you expect to eat? *(Grabs plate from her)* If you want something to eat, you can lick the scraps off their plates when they're done.

(STEP-SISTERS set their empty plates on the floor)

STEP-DAUGHTER 1: Here, Sindela -

STEP-DAUGHTER 2: eat until your hearts content.

(SINDELA reaches for the plate)

STEP-DAUGHTER 1: *(Stepping on her hand)* Oh, no, not like that.

STEP-DAUGHTER 2: Not like that at all.

STEP-DAUGHTERS: On your hands and knees.

STEP-DAUGHTER 1: If you, please.

STEP SISTERS: *(Barking like dogs)* Woof! Woof! *(They exit barking)*

(SINDELA looks at her STEP-MOTHER)

STEP-MOTHER: Don't look at me. If you're going to act like an ill-behaved dog, then you can eat like one.

(SINDELA looks at them all, then runs away)

STEP-MOTHER: I guess she wasn't hungry after all.

(ACTOR 3 comes on leading the COW)

CHANGEZ: I'm sorry, cow, but can I please take off your horn again and get some rice? My step-mother hasn't given me anything to eat in two days.

COW: Two days! Why didn't you ask sooner?

CHANGEZ: Because I'm afraid that one day you'll get tired of my asking so much, and then what will I do? I'll starve to death.

COW: Have no fear. As long as you take good care of me, I will always be happy to feed you whenever you are hungry.

CHANGEZ: Thank you, cow.

(CHANGEZ starts to unscrew the COW's horn. As he does so, his STEPMOTHER [Designated as STEP-MOTHER 1 in this script], played by ACTOR 2, comes

on and watches. She hides behind ACTRESS 1 who is playing a TREE.)

(As he empties the rice from the horn and then begins to eat)

STEP-MOTHER 1: So that's it. That's why he hasn't starved to death. The cow is feeding him. I'll have to find some way to get rid of the cow. Then we'll see just how long the boy manages to live on a few crusts of moldy bread.

CHANGEZ: *(Reattaching horn)* Thank you, cow.

COW: You're welcome.

CHANGEZ: It was delicious as usual.

ACTRESS 1: *(Breaking her pose as the TREE)* Wait a minute. Stop the story! Stop the story!

ACTOR 1: Stop the story? This is a play. You can't just stop the story.

ACTRESS 1: Well I can. And I did.

ACTOR 2: Why? What's wrong?

ACTRESS 1: I have a question. I want to know why all the bad people in these Cinderella stories have to be step-mothers?

ACTOR 1: Because that's just the way it is.

ACTRESS 1: I don't think it's right. I have a step-mother, and there's nothing bad about her. In fact she's really neat.

ACTOR 1: Look no one is saying step-mothers are bad. In fact most kids have good step-mothers or even step-fathers. It's just that in these stories the bad people just happen to be step-mothers. All right?

ACTRESS 1: I guess. Just as long as everyone understands that there is nothing wrong with step-parents or step-brothers

or step-sisters or step-anything.

ACTOR 1: We understand. Now, can we get on with the story?

ACTRESS 1: All right.

ACTOR 2: (AS STEP-MOTHER 1) Changez! Changez!

ACTRESS 2: (AS STEP-MOTHER 2) Yeh-Hsien! Yeh-Hsien!

STEP-MOTHERS: What do you think you're doing?

CHANGEZ and YEH-HSIEN: I was getting something to eat.

STEP-MOTHER 1: Getting something to eat!

STEP-MOTHER 2: Getting something to eat!

STEP-MOTHER 1: And who told you, you could have something to eat?

CHANGEZ: I'm hungry.

YEH-HSIEN: I haven't had anything to eat all day.

STEP-MOTHER 2: All day! The sun just came up.

STEP-MOTHER 1: We just got out of bed.

YEH-HSIEN: But I didn't have anything to eat last night either.

STEP-MOTHERS: Eat. Eat. Eat. That's all you ever think about.
Eating.

STEP-MOTHER 1: You'll end up eating me out of house and home.

CHANGEZ: But I'm hungry.

STEP-MOTHER 1: (Mimicking him) I'm hungry. I'm hungry. What about me?

STEP-MOTHER 2: I'm thirsty.

STEP-MOTHER 1: I'm hungry.

YEH-HSIEN: Here, let me get you some water. *(Handing her some water)*

CHANGEZ: Here, have some bread. *(Handing her some bread)*

STEP-MOTHERS: No. No. No.

STEP-MOTHER 2: Not that water.

STEP-MOTHER 2: Not that bread. I want meat.

STEP-MOTHER 2: I want water from that lake on the other side of the mountain.

YEH-HSIEN: But that lake is over ten miles away.

CHANGEZ: But we don't have any meat.

STEP-MOTHER 2: Ten miles? In that case, you'd better hurry, because I want some of that water, and I'm not in the mood for waiting.

STEP-MOTHER 1: No meat? In that case, you'd better kill the cow.

CHANGEZ: Kill the cow? I can't kill the cow.

STEP-MOTHERS: Do it now!

YEH-HSIEN: But-

STEP-MOTHER 2: And if you catch anything in your bucket, make sure you bring it to me. Do you understand?

YEH-HSIEN: Yes, I understand.

(CHANGEZ and YEH-HSIEN move away from their STEP-MOTHERS.)

CHANGEZ: Kill the cow. How can I kill the cow? If it wasn't for the cow and its magic horn full of rice, I would have starved

to death by now. Besides I like the cow. It's the only friend I have.

(The COW, played by ACTRESS 2 enters.)

COW: What's wrong now? Are you hungry?

CHANGEZ: No, cow. I'm too upset to be hungry.

COW: Upset? Why are you upset?

CHANGEZ: Meat.

COW: What about meat?

CHANGEZ: My step-mother wants meat. But the only meat we have is you.

COW: I see. Well, in that case, there's only one thing to do.

CHANGEZ: And what's that?

COW: Run away.

CHANGEZ: No good. She'd catch us before we were out of the village. If it was just me, I might be able to do it, but you're way too slow, and I'm not going to leave you behind.

COW: Then we will fly away from here as fast and as far as the wind can carry us.

CHANGEZ: How is the wind going to carry us?

COW: Grab my tail and pull as hard as you can.

CHANGEZ: Pull your tail? I'm not going to pull your tail. I might hurt you.

COW: If you want to save us both, then you must do as I say.