

The story of Marco Polo's tortuous journey back to his homeland after 17 years in the service of the Emperor Kublai Khan, head of the Yuan Dynasty, ruler of the greatest empire in the world, and the wonderful hand of providence in restoring him to his native soil (or in this case, canal).

The world is a story we tell ourselves about the world. -Vikram Chandra

Cast:

FEMALE PARTS (23)

LING: Princess Kokachin's maid

KOKACHIN: Kublai Khan's niece who knows her duty

CHEREN: Lesser Mongol princess with a lot of attitude

MONGKE: Princess Cheren's Lady-in-waiting

ERDENE: Princess Cheren's Lady-in-waiting

CHECHEG: Princess Cheren's Lady-in-waiting

AMARA: Foreign princess, Lady-in-waiting to Kokachin

SABRINA: Foreign princess, Lady-in-waiting to Kokachin

MINA: Foreign princess, Lady-in-waiting to Kokachin

HILDEBURGH: Varangian guard, Lucky's sister

WEN: Fu Chow's secret agent

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ZHILAN: Fu Chow's secret agent

NISHA: Indian wedding guest

ISABELLA: Lady Pirate

MARISOL: Lady Pirate

CORAZON: Lady Pirate

TOUR GUIDE: Eternally perky guide looking for clients

BIBI: Street urchin working for Camel K'arl

DARIA: Street urchin working for Camel K'arl

AZITA: Street urchin working for Camel K'arl

LALEH: Street urchin working for Camel K'arl

MRS. K'ARL/YASMINA: Camel K'arl's wife

PAREESA: K'arl's daughter

MALES (24 PARTS)

MARCO POLO: Adventurer, explorer, diplomat jailed in Genoa

RUSTICELLO DA PISA: Marco's cellmate and ghost writer

KUBLAI KHAN: Ghenghis Khan's grandson, ruler of Yuan Empire

FU CHOW: Kublai Khan's Chinese advisor

TEMEKIN: Head Mongol bodyguard

TEGUS: Mongol bodyguard

BOKE: Mongol bodyguard

BERKE: Mongol bodyguard

BATU: Mongol bodyguard, in love with Mongke

ULATAI: Kind Persian ambassador

ABUSHKA: Quirky Persian ambassador

KOJA: Cowardly Persian ambassador

GHAZAN/ALBORZ: Prince of Persia masquerading as a diplomat

DANTE: Italian Official on loan to the Byzantine Empire

PIETRO: Italian Official on loan to the Byzantine Empire

LUIGI: Italian jailer

CEDRIC: Pirate

CAPTAIN: Pirate

BJORN: Varangian Guard

LUCKY: Varangian Guard

CAMEL K'ARL: the king of used camel sales

KENJI: Camel K'arl's son

KAMYAR: spacey street urchin

CASPAR: street urchin shilling for K'arl

The Scenes

SCENE 1: Jail in Genoa, an Italian city state, 1298

SCENE 2: The Court of Kublai Khan in Cathay, (China) 1292

SCENE 3: A Courtyard at Kublai Khan's palace, Beijing, China

SCENE 4: Cara Mia

SCENE 5: Genoan Jail

SCENE 6: The Voyages

SCENE 7: Genoan Jail

SCENE 8: The Wrong Princess

SCENE 9: Genoan Jail - Luigi suggests a break

INTERMISSION

SCENE 10: Genoan Jail

SCENE 11: India

SCENE 12: Maahi Ve & Assassination attempt House of Wolves

SCENE 13: Camel K'arl's Camel Lot

SCENE 14: Genoan Jail

SCENE 15: Persia

SCENE 16: Release

SCENE 17: A Royal Wedding

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN BY SCENE

ACT I

SCENE 1: Jail in Genoa, an Italian city state, 1298

Luigi, Marco Polo, Rustichello

SCENE 2: The court of Kublai Khan in Cathay, (China) 1292

Ling and Fu Chow

Procession

Ling, Fu Chow, Kokachin, Kublai Khan

SCENE 3: A Courtyard at Kublai Khan's palace, Beijing, China

Mongols and Ling, Fu Chow

Cheren and her ladies (Mongke, Erdene, Checheg)

Mongols return

Amara, Mina, Sabrina, Tour Guide

Ling, Kokachin, Koja, Abushka, Ulatai, Alborz/Ghazan

SCENE 4: Cara Mia

Cara Mia and aftermath

Pietro, Dante, Lucky, Hilde, Bjorn

Mongols again

Wen, Zhilan, Fu Chow, Erdene, Mongke, Checheg

SCENE 5: Genoan Jail

SCENE 6: The Voyages

Pirate ship, Snorri, Cedric, Cook, Captain, Marisol, Bjorn, Isabella, Lucky

Persians, Kokachin, Ling, Mongols, Marco Polo, Fu Chow

SCENE 7: Genoan Jail

SCENE 8: The wrong princess

The wrong Princess – Cheren, Persians, Pirates, Varangians, Paduans

SCENE 9: Genoan Jail -Luigi suggests a break

INTERMISSION

ACT II

SCENE 10: Genoan Jail

SCENE 11: India

Mongols, Persians, Princesses, Ling, 6th grade crowd, Wen, Zhilan,

SCENE 12: Maahi Ve

Assassination attempt

SCENE 13: Camel K'arl's Camel Lot

Persians V Mongols

Camel K'arl, his kids, his wife, travelers

SCENE 14: Genoan Jail p 66

SCENE 15: Persia

Varangians

Mongols, Ladies, clothes switch

Ling as hostage

Persian intervention

SCENE 16: Release from jail

SCENE 17: Prince of Persia

SCENE 18: Finale

RETURN TO VENICE

ACT I - SCENE 1

Lights up on a bare cell with a ragged man sitting in one corner. Luigi the jailer brings in Marco and throws him into the cell with Rustichello. Luigi shouts at him in Italian as he throws him in.

RUSTICHELLO: Welcome to my humble abode.

MARCO: Thank you, I think.

RUSTICHELLO: So what are you in for?

MARCO: Who, me? I'm from Venice. War with Genoa. So, you know... wrong place, wrong time.
(pause a beat) What about you?

RUSTICHELLO: Same. Except I'm from Pisa. My name's Rustichello.

MARCO: Nice to meet you. I'm Marco.

RUSTICHELLO: That's it? You're not going to make a joke about my name? Rusty cello or something?

MARCO: Why would I do that? I have heard much odder names in my time.

RUSTICHELLO: Everyone makes stupid jokes about my name.

MARCO: That doesn't make it right. Rustichello's a good Italian name, and I haven't heard too many of those recently. At least it's not Marco Polo. That sounds like some kind of game. With horses, or maybe a swimming pool.

RUSTICHELLO: What have you been doing that you haven't heard Italian names in a while?

MARCO: What haven't I been doing? Until recently I was a clerk at the Mongol court in the East. At the moment I find myself unemployed.

RUSTICHELLO: The Mongol court in Cathay? You have returned recently?

MARCO: Fairly recently. Readjusting has been difficult. I keep wondering what is happening in all those faraway places I lived; places the rest of Christendom never even dreams about.

RUSTICHELLO: You must have lots of wonderful stories about the Orient.

MARCO: Sure. And no one would believe them.

RUSTICHELLO: Oh, I don't know. You'd be surprised at what people will believe. Anyway, you'll never know unless you tell the stories, right?

MARCO: I guess so. What is it you do, anyway, signore?

RUSTICHELLO: Oh, me? I'm a writer. So tell me.

MARCO: Tell you? Tell you 20 years of my life, just like that? I wouldn't know where to begin.

RUSTICHELLO: Why did you go? What wondrous things did you see? Why did you return?

MARCO: Why did I return? I suppose I could begin there.

(Lights out on cell)

SCENE 2: The Court of Kublai Khan in Cathay, (China) 1292

(Lights up on bare stage. Girl comes running on stage. She is Princess Kokachin's maid, Ling, and has been looking everywhere for her. She looks around frantically and then starts calling for the Princess.)

LING: Princess Kokachin! Princess Kokachin! Where are you? Your uncle will be here any minute. You have to be ready! (No response) Great! Just great! Kublai Khan, head of the Yuan Dynasty will be here in mere moments expecting to be greeted by his adoring niece and she is nowhere to be found! She won't show up and I'll get the blame. Will she care? No! Does it matter to her that my family reigned for a thousand years while hers was dragging their yurts through the dirt? No! In come the Mongols and out go the Sung! I wish she'd come in now! Princess! Please come greet your uncle! (Searches more, then gives up)

I am the descendent of emperors, I wasn't cut out to be a maid! It was a bad day for China when those barbarian Mongols took over and made all us native Chinese their servants.

FU CHOW: (Entering) Some have said so.

LING: Oh, tell me I did not say that out loud.

FU CHOW: But you did. The Great Khan would have you dismembered for even thinking such a thing, much less shouting it to the rooftops.

LING: Or he might not. He's very merciful that way ... sometimes.

FU CHOW: Stake your life on that, would you?

LING: (Throws herself at his feet and grabs his ankles) But you will not tell him, will you Grand Vizier? I am a loyal servant to his favorite niece, Kokachin. I was just so worried about her getting in trouble that I spoke without thinking.

FU CHOW: To speak without thought often causes the loss of speech and thought. (Makes head chopping off motions)

LING: True! But kindness is wisdom and you, oh excellent and esteemed Fu Chow, are noted for your great wisdom. If I am allowed to keep my head, I may find some small way to be useful to you, Exalted One.

FU CHOW: True. Get up, get up! I hear the Khan's retinue approaching. I will think about preserving your miserable life while you find the Princess.

(Ling runs offstage right, distraught and wildly looking for Kokachin.)

(Flutes, drums, music begin as tumblers and acrobats come on stage through audience. Girls throw flower petals in the air; soldiers line up as guards and tent makers bring in the set which is strips of gauze to make a tent. Slaves carry the Khan in on a sedan chair and Marco Polo walks along side conversing with him. Once everything is set up the Khan stands up and looks around as all kowtow before him.)

KUBLAI KHAN: (Standing)Good job. Nice entrance everyone. Great back flip, Sergei. Now where is my little niece? Where is Princess Kokachin?

(Fu Chow motions everyone to leave and they back away offstage right and left. He then stations himself behind the Khan's chair.)

(Ling runs in, ready to explain then stops abruptly stage right when she sees Kokachin entering from the other side)

KOKACHIN: (Entering from offstage left leisurely. She bows but a little more casually than everyone else.) Here I am, Uncle. What do you want?

KUBLAI KHAN: (Sitting back down) A little respect from my favorite niece would be nice.

KOKACHIN: How could I not respect the great, the magnificent Kublai Khan? (She bows) But really, Uncle, don't you get a little get bored with everyone cowering and kowtowing all the time?

KUBLAI KHAN: (Leaning back in his chair) No, not really. It's nice to know that my subjects understand that I am absolute monarch with power over every breath they take.

KOKACHIN: I'd get tired of everyone obeying my slightest wish all the time.

KUBLAI KHAN: I doubt it. But that is not your prerogative right now. Nor yours, Messer Polo.

MARCO: (At his right hand, bowing) Of course, your majesty. I serve at the pleasure of Kublai Khan.

KUBLAI KHAN: And don't ever forget it. I have found your company most amusing and enlightening these past 17 years. (Steepling hands) I cannot understand why you want to leave my service and return to Venice now.

MARCO: I do not wish to leave your service, Mighty Khan! But someone must tell the world of the wonders of Cathay.

KOKACHIN: What is so wonderful about this place?

MARCO: (Pacing in excitement to the front of the stage) To Europeans, everything! The majesty and supremacy of the great Khan, the rocks that burn with fire, the powder that explodes when lit, the wondrous foods of noodles and frozen cream.

KOKACHIN: Ice cream is pretty awesome.

MARCO: How will the Western world ever know of these marvels if I do not return to tell them? The name and fame of the mighty Kublai Khan will spread wherever people hear of these marvels. (Walks back to the Khan)

KUBLAI KHAN: Oh, very well. If you must leave, I will allow it, but only if you agree to escort my little princess here to meet her promised husband in Persia.

KOKACHIN: My what!? Where?!

KUBLAI KHAN: (Stands and goes over to Kokachin) That was a little surprise I was saving for you, my beautiful and dutiful niece.

KOKACHIN: Not again! Those Persian ambassadors dragged me off on that miserable, exhausting trip once already.

KUBLAI KHAN: I have a new plan, a better plan. (sits back down)

KOKACHIN: (Walks front and center) I hope so. 8 months of dirt and heat and camel fleas and they turned back because of a little squabble between the Tartars and their enemies. (turns back to the Khan) I hoped - thought - you had given up on that marriage.

FU CHOW: The great Khan does not know the meaning of the phrase "give up".

KOKACHIN: I wish he'd learn.

KUBLAI KHAN: That is a lesson unfit for any leader to learn, Kokachin.

KOKACHIN: Do I really have to make that awful, disgusting trip again, Uncle? I don't think those Persians could find their way to the market and back. The minute they saw Tartar weapons they turned tail and ran straight back here.

MARCO: It will be my honor to escort you safely to your wedding. (turning to the Khan) Does this mean my family and I will actually be returning to Venice, Great Khan?

KUBLAI KHAN: (Stands) If you must. I wish to secure the Western borders of my empire with the marriage of my little Kokachin to the King of the Persian Ilkhanate.

KOKACHIN: (Downstage left) All the way to Persia, and I don't know one soul there.

FU CHOW: (From behind the Khan's chair) Soon you will.

MARCO: (Walks downstage to Kokachin) Don't worry, Princess. I will see you safely there.

KOKACHIN: That's what I'm afraid of.

KUBLAI KHAN: What was that?

KOKACHIN: (Turns back to Khan) I'm afraid I will slow Messer Marco down on his homeward journey. He must be anxious to get back to his own country after all these years.

MARCO: I am, although nothing could be more important than carrying out this last commission for my benefactor and champion, the great and powerful Kublai Khan. (Bows to KK)

KUBLAIN KHAN: (Sits) Well said, Messer Polo. I know you will accomplish my will. In return, I bestow on you this golden passport to guarantee your safety and comfort on the long journey. (Gives the passport to Fu Chow who gives it to Marco)

MARCO POLO: Your consideration and provision is as wise and generous as always, Great Khan.

KOKACHIN: When do I have to leave, Uncle?

KUBLAI KHAN: Although it grieves me to send you away, little Kokachin, it must be soon. Within the week the transport will be ready.

KOKACHIN: A week! I can't get ready in a week!

FU CHOW: All has been prepared for you, my princess.

KOKACHIN: I see you have thought of everything, Fu Chow.

FU CHOW: I try.

MARCO: If we truly leave within the week, then I, too, have much to arrange, Your Excellency.

KUBLAI KHAN: You have my permission to begin your preparations, Marco, my friend. (Marco backs offstage, bowing) Do you have any questions for me, Niece?

KOKACHIN: I am too... ah ... overwhelmed with this great...honor to ask any, my lord.

KUBLAI KHAN: It is wonderful to see you are such a sweet, dutiful, obedient child. Fu Chow, prepare extra gifts of gold, silk, and spices to impress the Persian King with how dear Kokachin is to me.

KOKACHIN: Thank you, Uncle. May I take Ling with me?

KUBLAI KHAN: You may take whatever servants you wish to accompany you. Temekin will lead your bodyguard. I know I can trust him to see that no harm befalls either of you. You may go. (Kokachin bows and backs away)

FU CHOW: Your niece seemed very compliant, Your Highness.

KUBLAI KHAN: Yes, her mother raised her well. Which one was her mother?

FU CHOW: The beautiful and gracias Kaien.

KUBLAI KHAN: Ah yes, I remember. The cousin of the brother of wife number 47, wasn't she?

FU CHOW: Yes, Your Excellency. She would be deeply honored at the wonderful match you have made for her daughter, had she lived.

KUBLAI KHAN: Yes, yes, her death was a sad thing for all of China.

FU CHOW: (Muttering) Well, maybe not for wife #48...

KUBLI KHAN: I would like you to go to Persia with Kokachin to see that she arrives safely with the pomp and circumstance a ward of the Khan deserves.

FU CHOW: Worried that she might back out?

KUBLAI KHAN: I would be disappointed if she did not protest. I admire spirit in a horse and a girl. But it is more important in the horse. No, I am not worried. Kokachin will do her duty and cement this alliance.

FU CHOW: But just in case....

KUBLAI KHAN: (Stands) There is no, "Just in case" I merely wish her to have the wise counsel of the Vizier, my advisor and ally. See to it.

FU CHOW: Of course, oh great and noble Emperor.

KUBLAI KHAN: And keep an eye on that Ling. She's a flighty one.

(Lights out. Curtain closes.)

SCENE 3: A Courtyard at Kublai Khan's palace, Beijing, China

(Curtain opens on the courtyard of the Khan's palace. Temekin is talking to his men, Boke, Berke and Batu.)

TEMEKIN: All right, boys, you know we are to travel with Marco Polo as he escorts Princess Kokachin to. . . where are we going, Boke?

BOKE: Um, somewhere far, far away that starts with a P. Pomegranate? Polka? Pentagon?

BERKE: Persia, you halfwit!

BATU: What difference does it make? All we have to do is protect the Princess, right?

TEMEKIN: Persia! That's it. This is our big chance, boys! We have to know where we're going to know who we will be up against if someone means to do the Princess harm.

BATU: How can we know that?

BERKE: (Speaking slowly and distinctly) We study the route and whose territory we cross along the way.

BOKE: Study! When I joined the Imperial Guard I thought I would never have to study again!

BATU: I hate studying! (Pretends to slash with sword) Just give me a sword and a bow and I'll slaughter whoever threatens our Princess.

TEMEKIN: Big words! A worthy warrior must know his enemy.

BERKE: It is a time-honored Mongol tradition. Ghengis Khan did it, Chingu did it, the Great Kublai Khan- may he reign forever - does it....

BOKE: Studying them or steamrolling them by sheer numbers.

BATU: There are four of us bodyguards - the sheer numbers thing is not an option.

TEGUS: (Entering) Five! (High fives everyone) I can't let you four have all the fun.

TEMEKIN: There will be more than that! Hundreds of the Khan's best soldiers will guard the caravan, but since Princess Kokachin knows us so we will be her personal bodyguard for the entire trip.

BOKE: She knows us, but I don't think she especially likes us.

TEGUS: Just because of that one little incident...

TEMEKIN: Speak for yourself. She and I were playmates when we were little.

BERKE: Oh, yeah. You dipped her pigtails in ink and she made you get dressed up like a girl that one time.

BATU: Does that mean she likes you? If it does, I hope she doesn't decide she likes me.

(Ling enters)

LING: No worries about that. (Walking toward Temekin)

TEMEKIN: (In Ling's face) Well, she likes you. Although I have no idea why.

LING: Watch it, Temekin. You may be a big strong soldier now, but I am the one she listens to.

TEGUS: (Pulling Ling back from Temekin) Ling! You're going, too? This will be fun!

LING: I will never go anywhere with you again, Tegus. (Walking away)

TEGUS: Never say never, Ling. (She pulls away and walks toward Berke, downstage left)

BERKE: Aren't you nervous about going all the way to Persia, Ling? You get homesick when we move to the summer palace.

LING: Who's going to Persia?

BOKE: We all are. To escort Princess Kokachin to her wedding. (She whirls toward Boke)

BERKE: (Walks back toward the other 4) Yeah, but first we have to study Marco Polo's map. I think the sea route makes more sense.

BATU: But Temekin here gets seasick in a bath tub. I think we should take the northern route.

LING: (Pushing into the group) What wedding? They already tried that Persian alliance- it didn't work.

BOKE: (Ignoring Ling and talking to Batu) Are you nuts? Through the Taklamakin? In the summer?

BERKE: You want to go through a big scary desert whose name means “People go in, but they never come out” in the middle of the summer?

LING: (Walking outside the circle and pushing in between Tegos and Berke) Forget the Taklamakin. We aren’t going anywhere.

BOKE: I vote for the sea route.

TEMEKIN: The sea route has pirates. And how will we take our horses with us?

TEGUS: That is a problem. We might need our horses.

BATU: A Mongol without his horse is like a party without koumiss.

(They laugh at their own joke while Ling looks angry.)

LING: Is that all you men think of? Parties and drinking that disgusting fermented mares’ milk?

BERKE: Pirates are over rated. We can handle pirates.

LING: You five are idiots. We can’t be going to Persia, I would have heard.

TEMEKIN: Why? You’re just a girl and native Chinese at that.

LING: I am Kokachin’s chief lady in waiting. I would have had to pack for her, get all her possessions together, polish her jewelry, everything! You don’t know what you’re talking about.

FU CHOW: (Entering as everyone bows) Ah there you are, Ling! We have great news for you! We are going to Persia!

TEMEKIN: (Bowing. He whispers to Ling) Told you so! (Kneels up) Great and noble Fu Chow we are preparing for our duties as escorts. Do you know the route Marco Polo desires to take?

FU CHOW: No, but he and his entourage are making the arrangements now. You may ask him how he wishes you to proceed. You will find him in his rooms at the palace.

(They bow and exit)

LING: (Stands) Is it true? The Princess is going to Persia again? To be married?

FU CHOW: She is indeed. And you are to accompany her.

LING: I can't go to Persia! (Walks downstage right) I don't even know where Persia is. Is it farther than the summer palace?

FU CHOW: Much farther.

LING: Then I'm not going. Folds her arms and faces audience

FU CHOW: On the contrary. You will go and you will convince the Princess that this is the best thing that ever happened to her.

LING: If she doesn't want to go her uncle won't make her. That settles it. (Faces FuChow) We stay here.

FU CHOW: Kublai Khan may be indulgent, but he is still the supreme ruler of all of China and he will be obeyed. You spoke before of being of some use to me. You must convince the Princess to marry this Persian Prince.

LING: But how? What about me? I can't leave my family! I don't want to go to sea! I've seen those boats and they are leaky, stinking tubs.

FU CHOW: You have no say in this matter. Who do you think you are? You are a lowly native Chinese servant privileged to work for the Great Khan! If you wish to keep your head you will prepare the Princess and yourself for this long and difficult journey. And you will do it cheerfully and convincingly. Go!

LING: (Bowing in fear) Yes, exalted one.

(Fu Chow exits stage left leaving Ling still bowing. As Ling gets up to exit stage right, she is stopped by Princess Cheren.)

CHEREN: Wait a minute, Ling.

LING: (Bowing) What is it you wish, Princess Cheren?

CHEREN: A word with you about our trip.

LING: Our trip?

CHEREN: Yes, I will be accompanying Princess Kokachin to Persia with my ladies.

LING: That's... wonderful. (Ling tries to exit but Cheren stops her again)

CHEREN: It will be fun, won't it? So, how does Princess Kokachin feel about making that long, arduous journey again?

LING: We have not discussed it.

CHEREN: I heard you say she doesn't want to go. Why not? Doesn't she want to be Queen of Persia instead of just another Mongol princess?

LING: (Tries to leave again) You will have to ask her.

CHEREN: Oh, I will. You may be sure of that. Run along now.

(Ling leaves as Checheg, Erdene and Mongke enter giggling and bow to Cheren)

MONGKE: Good-morning, Princess Cheren. Have you seen Temekin?

ERDENE: Temekin? Or his handsome friend Batu?

CHECHEG: The one who has been secretly wooing Mongke?

CHEREN: Secretly courting one of my ladies in waiting? That is a good way to lose one's head.

MONGKE: But it's such a cute head! It really looks much better on his shoulders, Princess Cheren.

CHEREN: No one may approach my ladies without my consent.

ERDENE: He hasn't exactly approached her . . . yet.

MONGKE: But he will. Right now he just sort of smiles and waves. He's so adorable!

CHECHEG: He's all right. Temekin is much more rugged and handsome, though.

CHEREN: Enough. I am the Princess and I have some issues to discuss with you all. Tell Temekin his friend Batu had better remember his name means loyal. And that loyalty is to the Khan, and by extension to me! (She exits royally expecting everyone to follow)

ERDENE: (Whispering to Checheg) I told you not to say anything in front of her!

MONGKE: If she has Batu beheaded just because he fell in love with me, you are so dead, Checheg!

(They exit as Temekin and friends enter.)

BATU: Was that Princess Cheren and her ladies leaving?

TEGUS: Batu always notices the ladies.

BOKE: Run after them and you can get a glimpse of Mongke, Loverboy!

BATU: Run after her? I've been trying to avoid her. One little innocent smile and wave and she thinks I'm in love.

BERKE: You are! I heard you talking in your sleep last night about her. Mongke! Mongke! Your eyes, your hair, your smile!

BATU: I don't talk in my sleep!

TEGUS: (Walks around Batu) You not only talk in your sleep, you walk and sing and eat in your sleep

BATU: I do not.

BOKE: Then how did I know where you hid that letter Mongke sent you?

BATU: You better not have read that letter, Boke!

BOKE: What letter? Gotcha!

BERKE: He can't help it if he's irresistible to women, Boke.

BOKE: (Nods) They all lose their hearts to us handsome bodyguards!

TEMEKIN: He will lose his head if Cheren finds out he is courting Mongke without her permission.

TEGUS: He'd rather lose his head than deny his heart.

BATU: Look, I am not courting Mongke! (Backs away from group) She is cute and all but I don't want her getting all serious and marriage minded on me.

TEMEKIN: Well, we leave within the week so you don't have to worry about her.

BOKE: Yeah, by the time we get back she'll have forgotten all about you!

BERKE: She'll be married ...

TEMEKIN: To some Prince...

TEGUS: And have 6 kids!

BATU: She won't forget me! (pause) I mean....

BOKE: So you do care.

TEGUS: Then you can't just disappear.

BERKE: You have to give her some token to remember you by when you leave.

BATU: Flowers?

TEMEKIN: Flowers fade.

BATU: A letter?

BOKE: A letter is too incriminating.

BERKE: Something romantic, but not too specific.

TEMEKIN: How about a love song from your native tribe? She can remember it, but it's just a song if Princess Cheren asks.

BERKE: Have you heard the love songs of his native tribe?

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TEGUS: They sound like yodeling yaks.

(Enter Marco Polo)

MARCO: (Looking down at map) Another word with you about our route, Temekin. (Looks up, pauses, walks to Batu) Why so glum, Batu?

BOKE: Batu has a little problem with his love life.

BATU: I don't! Well, maybe I do, a little.

TEMEKIN: (Stepping between Marco and Batu) Don't encourage them, Messer Marco.

BERKE: How would you bid farewell to the love of your life, Messer Marco?

MARCO: I remember doing just that at 17. Shall I teach you an Italian farewell?

BATU: Yes! I mean no!

BOKE: Tell us, Messer Marco. Just in case.

TEGUS: Batu needs all the help he can get.

(They huddle up as Marco explains, then exit. Mina, Sabrina, & Amara enter giggling.)

MINA: Hurry, Amara! We have much to do to get the princess ready.

AMARA: I am hurrying! (Dropping an armload of clothes) Now see what you made me do.

SABRINA: Be careful. Those are some of the princess's wedding clothes.

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MINA: (Holding a gown up and dancing around.) This would look lovely on me don't you think? (She bumps into the Tour Guide who is walking in)

TOUR GUIDE: Excuse me. I am looking for Princess Kokachin.

AMARA: Who are you?

TOUR GUIDE: I hear the princess is going to Persia. I am here to offer my services as a guide.

SABRINA: The princess has a personal bodyguard, a Persian escort and a division of the Khan's army accompanying her to her wedding. I don't think she'll be needing you.

TOUR GUIDE: Well, I heard she had a little trouble last time. I just thought I would offer to help her find a safer, easier route.

MINA: We are confident the Khan has provided an ideal escort.

AMARA: I think you better go before the Princess's bodyguard finds you here and assumes the worst. It was kind of you to offer, though.

TOUR GUIDE: If you need my services, just let me know. She exits

SABRINA: That was odd. Someone like that showing up out of nowhere.

MINA: Imagine thinking the princess needed someone like her.

SABRINA: Now if it were one of those handsome soldiers, like Tegos or Temekin that would be another story.

AMARA: Just think, we'll be traveling with them to strange new lands soon.

(They laugh and pick up the clothes)

(Ling re-enters.)

LING: Have you seen the Princess? I can't find her anywhere. What are you three so happy about?

AMARA: Our trip! We're off to see the world.

SABRINA: Aren't you excited, Ling?

MINA: I can't wait to visit new places. Besides it's just a stone's throw from Persia to my homeland. Maybe I can see my sisters.

LING: How sweet. What about those of us being sent into exile in that dangerous foreign land?

SABRINA: We have been in exile here for most of our lives.

AMARA: Not that it isn't a great honor to serve the Khan, we're just excited about getting a little closer to our homes.

LING: Sorry. I'm just a little panicked what with packing and preparing and all.

MINA: We'll help you Ling. That's what we're here for after all.

SABRINA: That and finding suitable husbands. Any good prospects accompanying the caravan?

MINA: Is Boke going?

LING: Of course. And those Persians.

AMARA: Any of them minor nobility?

LING: I don't know. Why don't you ask them?

SABRINA: How about Batu?

AMARA: There she goes.

LING: What does everyone see in him?

MINA: I want to go meet those Persians. Come on.

LING: Duty first, remember.

AMARA: Here comes Princess Kokachin, girls. We better go start packing.

(They bow to Princess Kokachin as she enters and they leave.)

LING: Princess Kokachin! Is it true? Are you really to marry that King in Persia?

KOKACHIN: That is what I'm told. I thought the emperor had changed his mind, but I should know better than that by now.

LING: That's awful!

KOKACHIN: It wouldn't be so bad if not for the trip itself. And I am not overly fond of those Persian emissaries.

LING: Princess Kokachin, let's... let's get out of here.

KOKACHIN: What?

LING: Let's GO! Leave the palace, escape into the countryside and get away from those wretched emissaries taking us to our doom!

KOKACHIN: It's not the end of the world, Ling. It's just marriage.

LING: Marriage to a complete stranger thousands of miles away, doom... I don't see a difference.

KOKACHIN: And escape into the countryside? Do you actually think that's going to work? The Great Khan's guards would catch up to us before we ride a mile.

LING: (grudgingly) Yes, I suppose you're right.

KOKACHIN: Besides, I hear you told the Khan how willingly we'd obey.

LING: I just told Fu Chow that.

KOKACHIN: Same thing.

LING: Perhaps I fibbed. I have no intention of traveling to Persia, or letting you marry some foreigner. I know! Princess Cheren could take your place. She'd marry anyone if the money was right.

KOKACHIN: Cheren accompanies us.

LING: As backup? In case we're killed by bandits or disease or wild animals or die of thirst or...

KOKACHIN: It won't be that bad. I've already made most of the trip once. I'm tougher than you think.

LING: I'm not.

KOKACHIN: (Walks over to comfort her) Is that it? Are you afraid? Marco Polo accompanies us and Temekin and his men will guard us. It will be all right, you'll see.

LING: It's not about me. You don't even know this man you'll be marrying. Is he kind? Is he handsome? Does he treat his servants well?

KOKACHIN: The Khan wouldn't promise me to an evil man.

LING: Oh, no? Not even to solidify an alliance with the king of Persia?

KOKACHIN: I never thought of that...

LING: We are not chattel! We cannot be sold or used like property! We are above the mares, are we not?

KOKACHIN: Of course not. I mean, of course we are. Oh, you know I agree.

LING: You are a princess! With rights! We – you--must be allowed to exercise our individuality! Nothing is more important!

KOKACHIN: I am a princess, but there must be something more important than just me--us.

LING: JUST us? So, you think it's fine for Kublai Khan to hand us over to strangers and an uncertain future?

KOKACHIN: Everyone's future is uncertain. I am a servant of the Khan. If he believes that my marrying King Arghun will benefit the Mongol people, then I will do it.

LING: Ugh! I can't believe you. Believe me, I'll have your mind changed by the time we reach Persia.

KOKACHIN: No. You will speak no more of this, Ling. We go to do our duty and trust the fates that it will turn out well, as I know it will.

(Ulatai, Abushka, Koja enter)

LING: My day just keeps going from bad to worse. Let's get out of here.

ULATAI: (Stepping forward hesitantly) Princess Kokachin! It is an honor to see you.

LING: (Grabbing her arm and pulling her toward offstage right) Don't talk to them.

ABUSHKA: (Bowing toward Kokachin) Well met, Princess! We are anxious to escort you back to Persia.

KOKACHIN: Good afternoon, my lords.

KOJA: (Sauntering up) This time our trip will be more propitious.

KOKACHIN: It could hardly be less.

ABUSHKA: Yes, we certainly braved many dangers only to arrive back here where we began.

LING: Braved? (Turning away) That's not what I heard.

KOKACHIN: This time we will have Mongol body guards to protect us.

KOJA: Like we need them!

KOKACHIN: Come, Ling, I have some things that need special packing.

(They exit with Ling pouting)

ABUSHKA: Well, that went well.

KOJA: (Taking a step after them and then turning back) We gotta keep her from telling King Arghun what a bunch of losers she thinks we are.

ULATAI: Somehow, we have to convince her we are brave, noble warriors.

ABUSHKA: Maybe we can save her from a fate worse than death.

ULATAI: If this trip is anything like the last one we'll have plenty of opportunity to do just that.

KOJA: Personally, I'm glad those Mongols are coming. They can handle all the scary yucky stuff.

(Ulatai looks over and sees Ghazan entering upstage left.)

ULATAI: Who is this approaching?

KOJA: (Glances over at him) Looks like he might be Persian. Wonder what he is doing here.

ABUSHKA: Holy cow! Do you know who that is?

KOJA: I just said he looks Persian.

ULATAI: Kneel you idiot!

KOJA: Why? (turns his back on Ghazan) I doubt he outranks an emissary of the Persian Ilkhanate, whoever he is.

ABUSHKA: He is the Persian Ilkhanate. Kneel!

KOJA: Huh?

(Ulatai and Abushka drag him down to his knees and they kowtow)

ULATAI: Prince Ghazan!

GHAZAN: Get up! I don't want anyone to know who I am or why I am here.

KOJA: Why are you here, my prince?

GHAZAN: Drop the "Prince." In fact just call me Alborz.

ULATAI: "Unknown." I like it.

GHAZAN: (stepping toward Ulatai) I do not care what you like.

KOJA: (Bowing) Of course not, who are we after all?

GHAZAN: You are certainly not the capable, fearless emissaries we sent to bring back a princess, because of course those emissaries would have returned with her months ago.

ABUSHKA: We tried...

GHAZAN: "We tried!" Obviously not hard enough! I will make sure Princess Kokachin arrives safely in Persia this time and you will make sure no one knows my father had to send the heir to his throne to help you miserable excuses for ambassadors. Now introduce me to the Princess.

KOJA: Um, how?

ULATAI: Don't worry, your Highness, we'll find a way.

GHAZAN: I told you, no more "Your Highness"

ABUSHKA: Yes, your ... ah, Alborz.

(Ghazan starts to walk away expecting everyone to follow.)

KOJA: (Struts after him) Okay, Al.

ULATAI: (pulls him back) You forget yourself, Koja.

KOJA: He was harsh!

ABUSHKA: Don't make him mad or you'll find out what harsh really means.

ULATAI: The important thing is to introduce him to Princess Kokachin.

KOJA: Yeah, that'll be so easy 'cause we're her favorite people, right?

ABUSHKA: Just follow the Pr... Alborz and come up with an idea.

(Lights out)

SCENE 4: Cara Mia

(Later that evening outside Princess Cheren's quarters all 5 gather to help Batu say good-bye.)

BATU: Are you sure this will work?

BERKE: Messer Marco says it never fails and he's been all over the world.

BATU: But he's Italian! I'm just a Mongolian bodyguard. She'll think I'm an idiot.

TEGUS: What's your point?

TEMEKIN: Love makes idiots of us all at one time or another.

BOKE: Look at it this way, if she doesn't like it, you'll probably never see her again anyway.

BATU: Never see her again!

TEMEKIN: Are you a soldier of the most powerful emperor in the world or a sniveling coward? Just do it so we can get back to work.

BOKE: Call her.

BATU: Lady Mongke! (His voice breaks)

BERKE: Merciful heavens save us from this spineless wimp! Call her with some feeling, boy!

BATU: (More convincingly) Lady Mongke!

BOKE: That's better. Add some of that poetic stuff.

BATU: Light of my eyes, come to your window!

BERKE: Don't overdo it.

MONGKE: Who is there? Show yourself! Shall I call the guards?

TEMEKIN: No! Don't do that.

MONGKE: Then speak.

BATU: It is only a poor soldier whose heart you have stolen.

MONGKE: Batu? Is that you? You will get in trouble if the Princess hears you.

BATU: I have only come to tell you good-bye.

MONGKE: Good-bye? But why?

BATU: I can't tell you.

BERKE: Hurry up! We haven't got all night.

BOKE: Just sing the song.

(They sing Cara Mia. As they finish lights come on and Princess Cheren yells and everyone runs away)

CHEREN: What is going on here? What was that horrible noise?

ERDENE: Nothing, Princess.

CHEREN: Nothing? I know I heard something.

MONGKE: Just some... cats.

CHEREN: That reminds me, find a comfortable case for my cats. I don't want them upset by this trip. Well, don't just stand around. Finish packing and get to bed. We leave in the morning.

CHECHEG: Princess Kokachin said we were going in a week.

CHEREN: She may be, but I plan to be at the docks rested and ready when she and her scraggly retinue arrive. Now get my things together so I will outshine everyone we meet – or it will be your heads. (She exits, the ladies sigh)

ERDENE: I hate it when you make her cranky, Mongke.

MONGKE: That wasn't my fault!

CHECHEG: (Copying Batu) "Lady Mongke, Light of my eyes..."

MONGKE: Alright. But wasn't that the most romantic thing ever?

ERDENE: He is going to be so happy when he sees you on the boat!

MONGKE: I can't wait to see his face when he realizes we'll have this whole trip to spend together. Hurry up let's finish packing!

CHECHEG: So you can dream of the handsome Batu!

(Mongke throws clothes at her as they finish packing and the lights go out.)

(Lights up on corner of the courtyard where a group of hooded strangers is stealthily meeting.)

PIETRO: Good evening stranger. You're not from around here, are you?

LUCKY: Who me? Sure am. Born and raised. Why?

DANTE: You do not look like a Mongol or a native Chinese either.

LUCKY: So? What's it to you?

DANTE: You look different, you sound different, you're worshippers of heathen gods, too, aren't you?

HILDEBURH: That is such a stereotype!

PIETRO: Let me guess. Your sister?

LUCKY: I try to deny it, but somehow people always know. My name is Lucky.

HILDEBURH: No, it's not! His name is Svein Haraldsson, and I'm Hildeburh Haraldssdottir.

LUCKY: (glares at HILDEBURH) Nobody calls me that.

HILDEBURH: (muttering) Nobody but Mama, when you're in trouble.

LUCKY: I go by "Lucky."

(Bjorn suddenly appears and starts talking.)

BJORN: We hear you travel with Marco Polo back to the West. We wish to accompany you.

PIETRO: We? Who is we?

BJORN: My friend here, his sister, and myself.

PIETRO: Who told you this absurd tale?

LUCKY: Someone from Constantinople.

DANTE: Sssh! Does this person have a name?

LUCKY: Varangian.

PIETRO: Ssssh! Speak the password quietly. So you are here at last! Do you know your orders?

LUCKY: We are to follow this Polo fellow and the princesses and see that they do not strengthen the alliance with King Arghun of Persia.

PIETRO: By whatever means necessary.

LUCKY: Whatever means.

HILDE: Aren't you two Italian? Why do you plot against Polo?

BJORN: I find that a little suspicious.

PIETRO: That Venetian? He is no countryman of mine. I am a Paduan on loan to the emperor of Constantinople to see that the Khan does not strengthen the Persians against him.

HILDE: Those villains who destroyed Constantinople used Venetian ships.

BJORN: Venetians, Paduans. Whatever. As long as we get paid.

PIETRO: I thought you Varangians were known for your loyalty to the Byzantine Emperor.

LUCKY: Of course we are.

BJORN: Were, you mean. In case you haven't noticed, the Byzantine Empire isn't what it used to be.

PIETRO: Of course not, after the crusaders sacked and pillaged it and took over! Ignorant insolent dogs! All that is changing since Emperor Michael Palaeologus began rebuilding. Now we just have to be sure the Mongols do not attack until we get our city and our nation restored to its former glory.

BJORN: (muttering) Good luck with that.

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DANTE: Your job is simply to stop the alliance.

HILDE: The trip itself is so long and dangerous anything could happen to two pampered princesses.

DANTE: The caravan for Persia leaves within the week. You must not strike until we are farther away from Kublai Khan's court. His wrath is powerful and his revenge, terrible.

BJORN: Ha! We scoff at danger! For a price.

HILDE: Quiet. Someone's coming!

LUCKY: Look for us on the caravan. Send Hilde with this token if you need to confer with us.

(They exit separately, Hilde nearly bumping into Boke as he and the other body guards come out of hiding and meet back up.)

FU CHOW: (Stepping out of the shadows) Interesting. Perhaps the emperor should know of this. (He exits before Temekin's men see him).

BATU: Whew that was close, but I don't think Princess Cheren saw who we were.

TEMEKIN: You better hope she didn't.

BERKE: Who were those guys?

TEGUS: That one wasn't a guy.

BATU: There are strangers all over the city. You know how the Khan likes to meet interesting foreigners.

BOKE: I'd like to meet that one.

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TEMEKIN: Easy, Boke. We have enough lovesickness with Batu here. I need some of my guards to pay attention to the princess.

BATU: Hey. I pay attention.

TEMEKIN: Fine then--how did Messer Marco say we were to progress on our journey?

BATU: Ah, let me see...

TEMEKIN: Just as I thought!

BATU: Wait a minute, I've got it. We go to the port at Quanzhou and sail to Sumatra, and then to the Ilkhanate of Persia, via Ceylon and India.

BERKE: Dude! I'm impressed.

BATU: I'm an auditory learner.

BOKE: So. Now what?

TEMEKIN: Now, like I said, we study.

(All groan)

BATU: I was afraid of that.

TEGUS: You know, Temekin, I've heard too much studying can lead to brain fever.

TEMEKIN: No fear of that for you, first you must have a brain. The rest of us will study carefully.

BERKE: But since it's mostly sea travel, I guess all we have to study is pirates, right?

BOKE: And we already know all those pirate legends and stories, so looks like we're done.

TEMEKIN: We're done when I say we're done. Follow me and test on weapons and strategies.

BATU: I hate tests.

BOKE: You know the old Mongol saying, "Supreme treasure is knowledge."

BATU: Some teacher made that up.

BERKE: It's okay, Batu, maybe Temekin will make it a listening test, just for you.

(They exit. Lights up on corner of stage with Fu Chow talking to shadowy figures dressed in black.)

MONGKE: Erdene! Watch where you're going.

ERDENE: It's dark out here and this cloak is too long.

CHECHEG: Both of you hush! I can't believe you talked me into sneaking out to see your Batu, Mongke.

MONGKE: But he sounded so heartbroken and I never got a chance to tell him we were traveling with him to Persia.

ERDENE: He'll see you on the ship.

MAONGKE: But what if he dies of a broken heart before then?

CHECHEG: Small chance of that! It's much more likely he'll find a new girl to sing to.

MONGKE: How can you say that? His love is pure and eternal! There he is now. B-

(Checheg covers her mouth with her hand.)

CHECHEG: Quiet! That's not him!

(FuChow and 2 others move closer)

FU CHOW: I have told you what I know. I will watch for trouble, but I am too well known to infiltrate this band of rogues.

WEN: Varangians should be easy to spot.

FU CHOW: Perhaps, but all sorts of foreigners travel with us. Never underestimate your enemy.

ZHILAN: Knowledge is power.

WEN: We will gain their trust and find out all we can.

FU CHOW: Discover what the Byzantine emperor has planned and thwart it. Kokachin must arrive safely in Persia.

WEN: How do you wish us to proceed, your Excellency?

FU CHOW: The Princess has an adequate body guard and Ling is with her. No one will dare to harm her while they are in Cathay. Any attempt will be made once the journey is begun.

ZHILAN: Are they after Princess Cheren as well?

FU CHOW: She is but a decoy and expendable. Your mission is to protect Princess Kokachin.

ZHILAN: We will follow like shadows. They will never suspect we accompany them.

WEN: We will leave information for you by the usual method.

FU CHOW: Excellent. Go swiftly and silently. The entire fate of the Yuan Dynasty rests on your shoulders.

(They exit.)

ERDENE: Did you hear that? Princess Cheren is expendable!

MONGKE: That means we are, too.

CHECHEG: Sssh! Do you know what will happen if Fu Chow finds out we know that? Say nothing!

ERDENE: But we have to do something.

MONGKE: Let's tell Batu! He would never let anything happen to me- us.

CHECHEG: You just want an excuse to meet with him again.

ERDENE: But she's right. You heard him singing about "til the end of time". Maybe Batu and his friends can protect us. Where could they be?

CHECHEG: I heard Fu Chow as well. No one will try anything until we depart from Quanzhou.

ERDENE: It's too dangerous to try to find Batu tonight. We must get back before anyone notices we're gone and suspects we may have overheard something. We will speak with him on the ship.

MONGKE: Bu...

CHECHEG: Listen to sense for once, Mongke. It's not just your life that is in jeopardy here.

They exit. Wen and Zhilan reappear.

WEN: We must be losing our touch, they overheard us.

ZHILAN: But we overheard them, so that put us one up on them.

WEN: If they warn Princess Cheren it will endanger Princess Kokachin and the entire Yuan Dynasty will fall apart.

ZHILAN: We'll just have to see that they don't.

WEN: Maybe we should kill them.

ZHILAN: You are much too direct sometimes, Wen. We should try subtlety first.

WEN: Direct is usually quicker, easier and less likely to leave messy loose ends.

ZHILAN: This Batu they spoke of is one of Kokachin's bodyguards. We could get close to the Princess through him.

WEN: Oh, no. I am not flirting with simple minded Mongols just to keep some ditzy ladies' maid alive. Let's just kill them.

ZHILAN: Not unless we really have to. I'll do the flirting. When I'm finished with him this Batu won't believe a word that silly girl says.

WEN: Fine, but if that doesn't work I know 12 different ways to kill her using a rubber stamp and a shoestring.

ZHILAN: Hold that thought, Wen.

(Lights out.)

SCENE 5: Genoan Jail

(Lights up on prison cell with Marco and Rusticello)

RUSTICELLO: Who are these spies? Did they see this Batu at the port? Did Princess Kokachin get safely to Persia?

MARCO: You jump ahead, friend Rusticello.

RUSTICELLO: But did you actually go to all those places? Sumatra, Ceylon, Persia?

MARCO: Those places and more.

RUSTICELLO: What were they like?

MARCO: There were beautiful islands filled with jewels and gold. . .

RUSTICELLO: Really?

MARCO: And there were cannibal kings and huge hairy men. A nut as big as your head and trees that gave wine to drink.

RUSTICELLO: Are you serious? Hold on, let me get my pen so I can write all this down. This is going to be a best seller! What happened next?

MARCO: We proceeded to the port at Quanzhou and boarded 14 ships to begin our travel to Persia.

RUSTICELLO: Fourteen ships?

MARCO: Filled with silks and gold and all sorts of fabulous things

RUSTICELLO: Was Cheren there ahead of you?

MARCO: Princess Cheren was waiting there, looking like a beautiful China doll. For all the good it did her.

RUSTICELLO: What do you mean?

MARCO: I'm not sure how long Princess Cheren thought the trip would take. Maybe she thought we'd just sail out of the South China Sea and into the Arabian Sea overnight.

RUSTICELLO: Didn't you?

MARCO: Not exactly. It is several months travel even under the most fortuitous circumstances. Many more when you are assaulted by typhoons...

RUSTICELLO: Ty-whats?

MARCO: Huge storms of raging seas and torrential downpours. Princess Cheren should have saved her wiles until we got closer to Persia. Although, as it turned out she was smarter than I thought. It was about that time that we were attacked by pirates and...

RUSTICELLO: Pirates? Slow down. Describe everything. Don't leave out a single detail.

MARCO: There we were only two days out of Sumatra and just two of the Khan's ships in sight. Suddenly a tattered and leaky junk appeared on the horizon and began closing in on us...

RUSTICELLO: This is getting good. Go on.

(Spot light out on jail)

SCENE 6: The Voyages

(Lights up on deck of ship. Other ship in the distance)

ISABELLA: Ahoy, Captain! Thar she blows!

CAPTAIN: What are you talking about? Thar what blows?

ISABELLA: A ship, Captain!

CAPTAIN: Why didn't you just say so?

MARISOL: She's trying to be nautical

CORAZON: (Scrubbing the deck and humming) She's always trying to sound smart.

CAPTAIN: I'd rather she just tell me the Khan's ship is close enough to attack.

CEDRIC: (bounding onto the deck) Captain! Did I hear you say the Khan's ship is close enough to attack?

SNORRI: Attack! Attack! (Swinging an axe and foaming at the mouth)

CORAZON: Now see what you've done! You've messed up my clean deck and you've got Snorri in berserker mode. Calm down Snorri, it's time for your nap.

CEDRIC: But we need him for the attack.

SNORRI: Attack! Attack!

(The cook comes out and lures Snorri away with food)

COOK: I do not like that tone of voice, young man.

CAPTAIN: Don't say the "A" word! Get him below decks until we need him, Cedric.

CORAZON: And then come clean up this mess!

CEDRIC: Corazon, my lovely lass, anything for you. (Takes Snorri below without cleaning up)

MARISOL: "Anything for you!" Oh please!

ISABELLA: Anything but cleaning up after himself. (They clean up)

COOK: (Coming back up on deck) What's going on up here? I have a souffle in the oven, you know. It's very delicate.

CORAZON: Cedric said the "A" word and Snorri got all excited and spilled my mop water and then we had to clean it up because of course Cedric said he would, but he didn't.

MARISOL: That's what happens when you let just anyone on board.

CORAZON: What do mean by that? I'm just as good as any of you.

MARISOL: Not you! That crazy berserker, Snorri!

ISABELLA: And, hello, the Khan's ship is almost close enough to attack.

CAPTAIN: Be ready to man your battle stations everyone.

COOK: Does this mean I should hold dinner back for a while?

Cedric comes back on deck without Snorri

CEDRIC: We could eat first and attack second.

CAPTAIN: Don't be ridiculous, Cedric! We have to have the element of surprise and I fear they have already seen us.

ISABELLA: The way this tub looks, I doubt they are the least bit concerned.

CORAZON: Then they will be very, very surprised when we blow them out of the water.

PIETRO: What! You can't do that! You have strict orders to take the Princess hostage.

MARISOL: Back off, Buster. This is our ship.

CAPTAIN: We stole it fair and square.

CORAZON: You are here as a paying customer, not as our boss.

DANTE: Well, you need to remember that the customer is always right. And we are paying you well to get our hands on the princess.

MARISOL: Pay or no pay, we do not take orders from anyone.

ISABELLA: We are the rulers of this empire.

PIETRO: Captain! Talk sense to these silly women.

CAPTAIN: Ah, the thing is, they just let me act as captain. The ship actually belongs to these three.

DANTE: Warrior women! We have heard of such. How came you here?

ISABELLA: We were born on the peninsula of Iberia where we learned our sailing skills from the Norse raiders.

MARISOL: We were snatched from our homes and taken through the Mediterranean Sea and then across the Arabian Peninsula at the hands of slave traders...

CORAZON: ...Who now regret ever meeting us...

MARISOL: ...Until we “acquired” this ship.

ISABELLA: It is our home, our livelihood, our very lives, so here on the deck of this ship no Italian is going to step in and try to take over. Snorri!

CEDRIC: (Sticking his head in) Time to attack, is it?

MARISOL: Almost. There has been a slight change of plans. This plotter wishes the princesses taken unharmed.

CEDRIC: (Coming out on deck) Very well. That will be 14 additional pieces of gold. Each.

DANTE: What! That is highway robbery.

CAPTAIN: More like piracy.

PIETRO: If you ally yourselves to us, the Byzantine Emperor will reward you. There will be land and fame and glory untold if you help restore his rule. Don't you want to serve something greater than yourselves?

CORAZON: Why? Our allegiance is to our ship and ourselves and it works out very nicely for us.

MARISOL: However, gold helps with the up-keep and fresh supplies.

CEDRIC: So, hand it over. Or we use the very handy Chinese invention of gunpowder to blow that ship to bits.

PIETRO: Hah! The Khan's ship is too far away to throw powder at. Don't make asinine threats you cannot enforce.

CORAZON: Asinine threats! I'll show you who is asinine! Load the cannon, Cedric.

DANTE: Don't be hasty. We really do want them alive. Pay the man, Pietro.

PIETRO: Mercenaries! I bet Marco Polo doesn't have to pay for everything out of his own pocket. (hands over the gold) Here! Now get us those girls.

CEDRIC: Snorri! Time to attack.

(Snorri comes out yelling as lights go out.)

(Lights out, sound effects start. Cannons fire, explosions go off , sound of hand to hand fighting.)

(Lights up on Princess Kokachin's ship)

MARCO: (On the deck of the other ship.) Pirates are attacking Princess Cheren's ship. We must try to help them.

FU CHOW: We cannot risk Princess Kokachin.

BATU: Princess Cheren is on that ship? And her ladies?

FU CHOW: Of course.

BATU: We have to do something.

FU CHOW: We are doing something. We are sailing away as fast as we can to get Kokachin to safety.

TEGUS: But they're pirates. This is what we've been waiting for. Let us at them!

KOJA: Full speed ahead! Those pirates will be after us as soon as they see the Princess is not there. Tell the Captain to step on it!

LING: You would just run away and leave Princess Cheren to her fate?

KOJA: Our duty is to keep you and Princess Kokachin safe, not get killed by bloodthirsty brigands.

GHAZAN: There must be something we can do.

BATU: I'm going over there.

TEMEKIN: You do and you will be executed for deserting your post.

ZHILAN: (Running over to Batu for protection) And who will look after us if more pirates attack?

BOKE: Don't do it, Batu.

TEGUS: Who's this, Batu, another female admirer?

BERKE: Think with your head, not your heart. You gave an oath to the Khan.

BATU: But I can't just stand idly by...

ZHILAN: (Batting her eyes at Batu) You won't be standing by. You'll be protecting us poor defenseless females from those dreadful pirates.

WEN: Oh, now that is spreading it on a little too thick, don't you think?

BATU: (To Zhilan) Well, if you really need our protection....

KOJA: I'll be happy to stay here.

GHAZAN: You Mongols are under orders from your emperor to defend Princess Kokachin. I am not. Stay here, I'll go.

KOKACHIN: At least one of you Persians has some compassion. Save her, Alborz, please.

ULATAI: You cannot risk that, Pr... Alborz. I will take the row boat and try to help the Princess.

ABUSHKA: I'll go too.

(They both look at Koja expectantly.)

KOJA: What? You want me to come?

GHAZAN: I can't let you men go without me.

ULATAI: But neither can we be responsible for letting you risk your life.

LING: Why? What's so special about his life? Compared to yours, I mean.

ULATAI: We are, ah, brothers in arms, all for one and one for all, that sort of thing.

GHAZAN: Then we all go.

KOJA: But don't you think someone better stay here and look after things? Like me?

GHAZAN: Get in the boat, Koja.

ABUSHKA: Don't worry, Batu, we'll get Princess Cheren and her ladies to safety.

(They get into the boat and disappear.)

(Lights out on boat)

SCENE 7: Genoan cell

(Spot up on jail.)

RUSTICELLO: Well?

MARCO: Well, what?

RUSTICELLO: What happened? Did you know Alborz was really Prince Ghazan? Did they save Cheren and her ladies? Tell me!

MARCO: They disappeared into the smoke and fog and we sailed toward India.

RUSTICELLO: That is so wrong! Didn't you follow them? Have a huge battle? Save the damsels in distress?

MARCO: That was not my charge from Kublai Khan.

RUSTICELLO: Aaargh!

MARCO: Do you want me to finish the story?

RUSTICELLO: Maybe. If it gets better. This is not how a proper story goes, you know.

MARCO: No, this is how real life goes.

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(Spot out on jail.)

SCENE 8: The wrong princess