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## The Egyptian Cinderella

**The same, well-loved story, but this time in a different setting... Characters**

STORYTELLER

RHODOPIS, a beautiful young maiden

EAGLE

PHARAOH, leader of the Egyptian people

FARMER

TAX COLLECTOR

ROYAL SCRIBE

TWO MAIDENS

TWELVE SLAVES

**SETTING:** Stage is bare except for chair at side.

**AT RISE:** STORYTELLER enters.

**STORYTELLER:** We all know the old story about Cinderella. But not everyone knows that the Cinderella story is told in countries all over the world. Sometimes she is called by a different name, but you'll see that Cinderella's story is very much the same, even in ancient Egypt, as it is in our country today. Let's see what happens to Cinderella in that far corner of the world. (He sits in chair.)

The biggest thing in all of Egypt is the River Nile. (FOUR SLAVES enter and put down the River Nile. They stand stiffly at center.) Because Egypt is large, it is divided into two parts--upper and lower. This is the land where palm trees grow. (FOUR SLAVES enter carrying palm trees and put them in place along the River Nile. They stand in front of first group of SLAVES.) And, of course, the most famous buildings in both upper and lower Egypt are the pyramids that sit in the great desert. (FOUR SLAVES carry in various-sized pyramids and put them in place. All SLAVES exit.)

Many years ago, thousands and thousands, as a matter of fact, there lived in upper Egypt a beautiful young girl named Rhodopis. Rhodopis is an unusual name, but in the Egyptian language it means "rosy cheeks." We see that it is a good name for her, isn't it? (RHODOPIS enters, carrying her gilded sandals.) Today she is very happy because it's her birthday. RHODOPIS (Addressing audience): And see what a wonderful present I have received. Beautiful gilded sandals! (She shows them to audience.) I have just come from giving thanks for them in my prayers at the great sphinx. I have always dreamed of owning such a pair of sandals. (She puts them on.) Oh, they feel comfortable to walk in, and look how they shine in the sun. (She runs about, showing the audience her shoes.) Oh, but I forgot what I came here for. I must bathe in the royal River Nile. (Quickly she removes her sandals and walks in the water.) The water is wonderfully warm this morning. It feels good on my toes. (She giggles slightly.)

**STORYTELLER:** While rosy-cheeked Rhodopis splashed in the water, a great white eagle flew over the River Nile. (EAGLE enters and with wings spread wide apart circles about the stage.) And the large bird saw the sandals gleaming and glistening in the sun. They shone so beautifully that the eagle flew down to the desert to have a better look at them. (EAGLE does so.) And then quite suddenly the eagle took one of the sandals in its claw and flew away. (EAGLE does so.)

**RHODOPIS:** Come back with my beautiful sandal! Please bring my sandal back! Please!

**STORYTELLER:** But the eagle was too fast for Rhodopis, and soon it flew out of sight. (EAGLE exits.) And as it disappeared, Rhodopis could see that it still held the gilded sandal that she loved so dearly. Rhodopis went home crying. (Crying, RHODOPIS exits.)

Now, in another part of Egypt, in the great city of Memphis, dwelled the Pharaoh, ruler of all Egypt.

Everyone who came before him knelt on a beautiful carpet. (FOUR SLAVES enter and spread a circular carpet of gold and purple on the floor. Then they stand at attention.) And the Pharaoh sat on a throne of gold. (Throne is rolled on and put in place by FOUR SLAVES, who stand with first group.) This throne sat outside the largest temple in Egypt. Behold, the Pharaoh approaches. (PHARAOH marches in, followed by FOUR SLAVES. He sits on throne, and TWELVE SLAVES gather on either side of him. TAX COLLECTOR enters with FARMER in chains.)

**PHARAOH:** Today I will hear the cases of the court. Royal Tax Collector, step forth.

**TAX COLLECTOR** (Stepping forward and kneeling before PHARAOH): Great Pharaoh, I have here a man who must be punished.

**PHARAOH:** What is his crime? He does not look wicked.

**TAX COLLECTOR:** This man will not give part of his harvest to the royal granary. He will not obey the law. I have beaten him and still he will not pay.

**PHARAOH:** You have no right to beat anyone. We will hear his story. Bring the man before me. (He claps his hands.)

**TAX COLLECTOR:** Yes, great master. (He shoves FARMER before PHARAOH.) Here he is. But I can tell you nothing will make him pay.

**PHARAOH:** Good man, is this true? Will you not pay your taxes as the law demands?

**FARMER:** Royal Sovereign, I cannot pay. I have no wheat. My harvest was eaten by worms and birds and by the water buffalo. They left me nothing for my family. My wife and children have gone hungry. And this is my greatest sorrow, because I love them so much.

**PHARAOH:** Where is your family, good man?

**FARMER:** In the prison, great master, locked in chains. When I could not pay my taxes, the soldiers took us away from our farm and put us in prison.

**PHARAOH:** Is this true, Tax Collector?

**TAX COLLECTOR:** Yes, master, I ordered them to be punished.

**PHARAOH** (To TAX COLLECTOR): You are responsible for this injustice?

**TAX COLLECTOR** (Meekly): Yes, sir.

**PHARAOH:** Often in the past I have declared there shall be justice in my kingdom. You have done a wicked act, Tax Collector. You have punished this man and his family when they did no wrong. You have disobeyed my instructions. Therefore, you will never serve me again. Leave us. (TAX COLLECTOR, stunned, bows and exits.) Good farmer, your punishment will not go unnoticed. Since you and your family have had ill fortune and are hungry, I shall give you enough wheat and corn from the Royal Granary to

feed you until your next harvest comes in.

**FARMER** (Overwhelmed): Oh, thank you!

**PHARAOH**: And I shall send gifts to your wife and children.

**FARMER**: They will be most happy. Thank you, thank you, great sovereign.

**PHARAOH**: You are free, good man. (TWO SLAVES remove FARMER's chains.)

**FARMER**: With your permission, I shall go to my family. I long to see them. We have greatly missed one another.

**PHARAOH**: You may go. (As FARMER exits) But stop one moment. (FARMER stops, turns.) Remember, if you will, good man, that even without food and in prison you still have a greater treasure than I can bestow upon you, for you have those who love and cherish you. Because of this you are a happier and richer man than I.

**FARMER**: But if this be so, great sovereign, why do you not take a wife, who would love you and look after you as mine does?

**PHARAOH**: Alas, I can find no woman suitable to share the throne and help me govern my people. I have looked everywhere.

**FARMER**: I am certain that a ruler as wise and generous as you will someday find a worthy person.

**PHARAOH**: I hope so. (EAGLE flies in with sandal in its claw.)

**FARMER**: Look at the great bird!

**PHARAOH**: What is that in its claw?

**FARMER**: It comes this way; we will see. (EAGLE crosses to PHARAOH, drops sandal in his lap, then exits.)

**PHARAOH**: A sandal! A gilded sandal!

**FARMER**: It is beautiful!

**PHARAOH**: See how small it is. It must be a tiny foot that fits this sandal. No doubt it belongs to a dainty and beautiful maiden. (To FARMER) I will think no more of cases today. You may leave. (FARMER bows, exits. PHARAOH studies the sandal.) Only a lovely maiden could wear so lovely a sandal. I wish I knew where the eagle found it. I wonder who the person is who owns this sandal? Where can she be if I have not seen her? I have an idea. I will have every maiden in Egypt try on this sandal until I discover the owner. (Calling) Royal Scribe, come forth. (ROYAL SCRIBE, who is very clumsy, rushes in and bows.) I wish you to write a royal proclamation. Prepare the papyrus. (SCRIBE attempts to open a roll of papyrus, but each time he lets go of one end of paper, it rolls up and he cannot spread it out far enough to write

upon it. After he has made several attempts, PHARAOH motions to TWO SLAVES to hold the ends outstretched while SCRIBE writes, and they do so.) Are you a good scribe?

**SCRIBE:** My hieroglyphics are the most beautifully drawn in the whole land, master. But I do have trouble holding the paper down.

**PHARAOH:** Write the following message upon the papyrus: "Every maiden of Egypt shall put this sandal on her foot. She whose foot it fits will be Queen of Egypt." (To SLAVES) Now, bring a cushion to carry this sandal upon and go forth. (TWO SLAVES exit, return with cushion as SCRIBE finishes writing proclamation. PHARAOH exits.)

**STORYTELLER:** And so they set out through Egypt, looking for Rhodopis, although, of course, they did not know whom they were looking for. When they came to a new city, the Scribe would read the proclamation. (SCRIBE has difficulties unrolling scroll; again SLAVES must assist him.)

**SCRIBE** (Reading): "Every maiden of Egypt shall put this sandal upon her foot. She whose foot it fits will be Queen of Egypt." (TWO MAIDENS enter.)

**1ST MAIDEN:** I had a slipper like that once. Just think, I may be queen!

**SCRIBE** (Trying sandal on): But there is only room for your big toe in this slipper.

**1ST MAIDEN** (Huffily): Obviously, no one could wear a sandal this small.

**SCRIBE:** Perhaps you are right. Hundreds have tried it on and it fits no one.

**2ND MAIDEN:** Let me try it. My feet are not as fat as yours.

**1ST MAIDEN:** My feet may be flat, but they certainly aren't fat!

**2ND MAIDEN** (As SCRIBE puts sandal on her foot): Ouch! You're pinching me. Take it off.

**SCRIBE:** I am sorry, young ladies, but it does not fit either of you.

**STORYTELLER** (As SCRIBE, SLAVES, and MAIDENS exit): And so they went through Egypt, stopping everywhere but never finding a foot to fit the slipper. And all the while the kind Pharaoh sat upon his throne waiting to hear that the maiden had been found. But day after day went by and there was no news of the maiden who was to become his queen. He grew unhappy. (PHARAOH enters, looking gloomy.)

**PHARAOH:** Where can she be? I will never be happy again until I know. I must find her. (SCRIBE enters and kneels before PHARAOH.)

**SCRIBE:** I bring sad news, sire. We have covered both upper and lower Egypt, and everywhere hundreds and hundreds of maidens have tried on the gilded sandal, but it fits no one. We have nowhere else to go. I am sorry, master, not to fulfill your wishes. Can you forgive me?

**PHARAOH:** It is not your fault. You have done as you were told. I fear my fate is that I am never to know

true love and friendship. (FARMER enters.)

**FARMER** (Kneeling before PHARAOH): May I speak a word to you, great Pharaoh?

**PHARAOH**: Of course.

**FARMER**: I am the farmer whom you pardoned, and you gave me wonderful gifts. I know that you seek the owner of the gilded sandal.

**PHARAOH**: I fear there is no such person. We cannot find her. We have stopped searching.

**FARMER**: Perhaps I know where she is.

**PHARAOH**: Do you, my friend?

**FARMER** (Explaining): Each morning as I go to my fields, I behold a young maiden praying in the desert. She is the loveliest girl I have ever seen, and I cannot help thinking that she is the owner of the gilded sandal.

**PHARAOH**: Tell me, kind farmer, what does this maiden look like?

**FARMER**: In the morning, in the light of the rising sun, she brings beauty to the entire desert. But you must go to the desert early in the morning. That is the only time I have ever seen her.

**PHARAOH**: Where is this place?

**FARMER**: Not far from the great sphinx.

**PHARAOH**: Will you take me there?

**FARMER**: Of course, good master. If we set out tonight, we will be there at dawn.

**PHARAOH**: You lead the way. We shall go to the great sphinx of the desert. (PHARAOH, SCRIBE, and FARMER move upstage.)

**STORYTELLER**: And so the farmer led the young Pharaoh through the desert, in and out and around the pyramids. They traveled all night long. (Lights go down as the sphinx is rolled in by SLAVES, then go up as RHODOPIS enters and kneels in front of it.)

**RHODOPIS**: Oh, great sphinx, please protect everyone, from the slave girl to the great Pharaoh who is kind and good to us. (PHARAOH, SCRIBE, FARMER, and SLAVES come forward, unnoticed by RHODOPIS.)

**PHARAOH** (Whispering): Did she speak my name? I thought I heard her mention the Pharaoh.

**FARMER**: Yes, master, she prays for you.

**PHARAOH**: Surely this must be she, a kind and thoughtful girl who prays for me. I cannot believe it.

**FARMER:** We will soon know if she is to be your queen.

**PHARAOH:** You speak to her.

**FARMER:** Very well. (To SCRIBE) May I have the sandal? (SCRIBE gives him the sandal and he approaches RHODOPIS.) Pardon, young lady, may I speak with you?

**RHODOPIS:** I am sorry, but I must hurry away. The sun has come up. I am needed at work.

**FARMER:** Allow me a moment, please. RHODOPIS (Running away): I cannot.

**FARMER:** All I ask is that you try on this gilded sandal.

**RHODOPIS** (Stopping): Try on what? What did you say?

**FARMER** (Showing her the sandal): This sandal.

**RHODOPIS** (Returning): My sandal! The eagle took it away many weeks ago. Where did you find it?

**FARMER:** The Pharaoh found it.

**PHARAOH** (To SCRIBE): Read the maiden the proclamation. (SCRIBE goes through his usual difficulties unrolling scroll, is helped by SLAVES.)

**SCRIBE** (Reading): "Every maiden of Egypt shall put this sandal upon her foot. She whose foot it fits will be Queen of Egypt." (He puts the sandal on the foot of RHODOPIS.) Look, it fits as if it were made for her.

**RHODOPIS:** It was made for me. Look, it's just like this one. (She produces the other gilded sandal.)

**FARMER** (Smiling): Now there can be no doubt. Great master, this girl is the one you have waited for for so long. She is your queen.

**PHARAOH:** No Pharaoh has ever been happier than I. If only you will say, beautiful maiden, that you will be my queen.

**RHODOPIS:** Are you the great Pharaoh? I have long dreamed of the day when I might travel to Memphis and watch you pass by in the street.

**PHARAOH:** Instead, it is I who have come to see you, and to take you away with me if you so choose.

**RHODOPIS:** But I am only a poor slave girl. All that I have of any value is my sandals. Surely you do not want me to be your queen.

**PHARAOH:** Oh, but I do. Please believe that I do.

**RHODOPIS** (Smiling): Then I can ask nothing more than to share your life. I will make you the best wife and queen that I possibly can.

**STORYTELLER:** And so the Pharaoh led the happy young Rhodopis back through the desert to his throne in the great city of Memphis. All along the way crowds gathered to see their new queen. (Procession makes its way back to the throne. SLAVE carries in a crown on a pillow.) The crown of the Queen of Egypt was placed on the head of Rhodopis with the royal asp rising from her brow. (PHARAOH crowns her.) And thereafter as they sat side by side ruling the great land of Egypt, Rhodopis, the rosy-cheeked, wore her gilded sandals that had brought her the great love of the Pharaoh, and they were happy all their days. (Curtain)

THE END

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

**CHARACTERS:** 1 male (Pharaoh); 3 female (Rhodopis, Two Maidens); 17 or more male and female for all others.

**PLAYING TIME:** 20 minutes.

**COSTUMES:** Storyteller wears modern dress. Pharaoh, Tax Collector, and royal Scribe wear elaborate costumes; slaves wear appropriate Egyptian costumes. Rhodopis and maidens wear simple, long flowing dresses; Farmer wears old, tattered clothing; Eagle wears a feathery bird costume.

**PROPERTIES:** Chair; long strip of green for River Nile; palm trees (these may be constructed from colored paper); pyramids; gilded sandals; round purple and gold carpet; throne; chains; large scroll; quill pen; sphinx; crown.

**SETTING:** Stage is bare at opening, and objects are brought on by slaves according to directions in text.

**LIGHTING:** Lights dim when sphinx is brought on, then rise again.

**SOUND:** No special effects.

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By Lowell Swartzell

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