

Opera Libretto: By Gene Rotberg

TARHIR!

(formerly titled “Oh, Egypt”)

Cast

(in order of vocal appearance)

The President

Military Guards (Quartet)

Hamadi, Captain of Guard, betrothed of Akila

Akila – Protestor, daughter of Tarik

Tarik – Akila’s father, an old soldier

Chorus of Protestors

Sextet of Protestors

- The Pious
- The Youth

- The Militant
- Poverty
- The Patriot
- The Cynic

The Hoodlums (Quartet)

The Privileged (Trio)

TV Reporters/Camera Men (Trio)

The U.S. Representative

The Saudi Representative

The Israeli Representative

The Prisoner

(During overture, as curtain rises, a video (or behind a scrim) Hamadi and Akila are seen sitting, feeding each other dates and grapes in a vast, empty desert. Hamadi is dressed in a military uniform, Akila in a long white dress. Reluctantly, they leave each other, in opposite directions, Hamadi toward a Presidential Palace in upper right background, Akila toward upper left toward her house and Tahir Square in far distance.)

ACT I. Scene I – The President and Military Guards at Presidential Palace

PRESIDENT (looking at large TV set showing Tahir Square):

I hear a rumbling, a murmur

In the streets, a kind of hum,

Not yet one of anger or despair,

They call it freedom. It's in the air.

It is nothing, I am sure,

Soon it's time for prayers,

Then they'll leave for home

And forget their cares.

MILITARY GUARD QUARTET (one voice):

You need not fear,

Our troops are near.

They are there

Already in the square.

(Aside):

But we have a stake in this too,

We will protect what is our due.

PRESIDENT:

Do not doubt me;
I lead you still. Their voices are not yet shrill,
As if Gandhi seems to have struck a tone
Far from home.
That mob is unarmed, passive,
It does not matter if their protest's massive,
Soon it's time for prayers.
Then they'll leave for home
And forget their cares.

MILITARY GUARD QUARTET (To President):

You have our word
Though there is no crisis yet, you can be sure
We can move before the sun is set.
(One breath)
Our vocation,
To our nation is
Without reservation, hesitation,
Procrastination, provocation,

Or emotion, derision or indecision,

Perfection or correction,

Reflection or misdirection -

We will carry out your orders

With precision.

PRESIDENT:

Egypt has seen all this before,

Pestilence and war and more.

Let them be.

They are no threat to you or me.

MILITARY GUARD QUARTET (aside):

He protests too much,

For years he had the power

To decide those who rise and those who fall.

Those who die chained to a prison wall.

No longer is he loved by all.

He knows their love has turned to ice;

He no longer heeds advice.

Though our arms now are by our side,

Woe betide

That fateful day when

Without fuss

We will decide – him or us.

HAMADI, CAPTAIN OF GUARD AT PALACE. NOTE: HAMADI NOT PART OF MILITARY GUARD

QUARTET (*He moves apart from Military Quartet and directs his aria to Akila spotlighted in far distance at window of her house overlooking Tahir Square.*):

I fear for my betrothed

Lest she leave her home and dare

To protest in the square.

No telling what today will bring,

Let's hope it's just a sometime thing,

I dream of my Akila fair,

I see her everywhere:

In the stream made deeper by her tears,

In the sun made brighter by her glow,

In the desert made cooler by her shade.

Fade/Curtain

ACT I. Scene II

(Opens to Akila and her father in well-furnished room overlooking Tahir Square. Akila seated by same window.)

AKILA:

Come, my father dear, march with me

And you will hear a new beginning.

The curtain rises, for all to see

Egypt's day shining through

Come, it is for you.

TARIK, AKILA'S FATHER *(old soldier):*

(With bitterness as he looks out of window down on square.)

Stay a while,

Live a while, smile a while,

Stay a while. Live a while. Smile a while.

Those boys and girls in the street will not last,

They're easily cowed, this crowd

Of the great unwashed.

Remember, I am a soldier

Who out of poverty rose to advance

And it was not by chance

That the one you so revile

Made our lives worthwhile.

AKILA:

Father dear,
He stripped us of dignity,
With wickedness he stifled all
And, imprisoned those
Who dared not to respond to his very call.
Unheard of for decades, they languished
Please, my father, do not go on so
He must go.

TARIK:

(Not paying attention to daughter, he crosses room, opens closet, takes out his military coat.

Reverie)

Ah, my great coat, once adorned
With medals, has seen its day.
It is, like me, too frayed
To protect Egypt's honor. I am old,
No longer bold, to protect Egypt's honor.

(Then to Akila)

Remember, my daughter, he who made our lives worthwhile
Let us rise above the rank and file.
Surely, he does not deserve exile.

Years without peace are in store, privation and war.

It's happened before.

AKILA:

Father, though I love you so

You must know,

My heart beats for others too

Who seek their due after years

Of oppression, of toil to no avail,

Always failing

To achieve their due.

TARIK:

You would not have gone to school were it not for him

You would be working in the fields till

The light grows dim without him.

No clothes would adorn your grace without him

No Mafouz or Rumi

Without him.

You would wear a black burka instead.

Covering yourself as if in sin.

No Hamadi would bless our home

Were it not for him,

And you must know if you go
You leave me too. . . alone.

AKILA:

You cannot ask me to choose
Between you,
And my friends, some behind bars,
Others protesting down below.
Father, do not ask me to choose.

*Spotlight on **Military Guard Quartet** (in background at palace):*

We protected Egypt from its enemies
From within and without
We did not turn to rout,
Our comrades gave their lives to bring us dignity,
While those who now protest
Were drinking tea,
Bragging about the wonders of our antiquity.
That is all they did
As we bid farewell our comrades to their final rest.
Egypt's best.
No, we will hold our due;

We will hold what is our due.

QUINTET

MILITARY GUARD QUART:

We protected Egypt from its enemies
From within and without
We did not turn to rout,
Our comrades gave their lives to bring us dignity,
While those who now protest
Were drinking tea,
Bragging about the wonders of our antiquity.
That is all they did
As we bid farewell our comrades to their final rest.
Egypt's best.
No, we will hold our due;
We will hold what is our due.

AKILA:

My heart beats for others too,
Who seek their due after years
Of oppression, of toil to no avail,
Always failing
To achieve their due, etc.

(Double spotlights on Akila and Tarik and President, Hamadi, Military Guard Quartet)

PRESIDENT:

It's all frivolity.
That mob's passive

It does not matter if their protest massive
Soon it's time for prayers
Then they leave for home
And forget their cares.

HAMADI:

I love her so; her glow brightens the day.
I see her everywhere
In the stream made deeper by her tears,
In the sun made brighter by her glow,
In the desert made cooler by her shade.

AKILA:

I am not alone.
My heart beats for others
Who seek their due.

TARIK:

He made our life worthwhile
The man you so revile.
For all his evil ways, he gave us stability
I lived in poverty, degraded

Till he picked me up from the gutter.

Nothing else matters.

OCTET (which repeats above)

PRESIDENT:

It's all frivolity, don't worry.

That mob's passive

It does not matter if their protest massive

Soon it's time for prayers

Then they leave for home

And forget their cares.

AKILA:

I am not alone.

My heart beats for others too

Who seek their due, etc.

MILITARY GUARD QUARTET:

We too will hold our due, etc.

HAMADI:

I love her so; her glow brightens the day.

I see her everywhere

In the stream made deeper by her tears,

In the sun made brighter by her glow,

In the desert made cooler by her shade.

TARIK:

He made our life worthwhile

The man you so revile, etc.

Curtain – Pause. (about two minutes.) Music reflects

the huge, boisterous crowd protesting, milling about to be seen for first time in next scene.

**Scene III – Stage opens to Huge Tahir Square packed with Protestors/Chorus. Military
lounging on sides. Nile in background**

*(Crowd humming, singing and dancing. Slow, sinuous, then faster Egyptian dance. Like Va
Pensiero or Dutch in Don Carlo with Arabic rhythm!. Military is lethargic, non-confrontational.)*

CHORUS OF PROTESTORS:

(Saraband or Cabaletta as a counterpoint to cacophony of crowd.)

We gather for peace, for breathing space,

We will stay day and night,

It is our right.

We will stay today and everyday.

It is our only chance for

Freedom here, freedom near.

*(A Sextet, one at a time, appears from crowd of protestors – 6-part Harmony, each with
different melodies/rhythm.) Note: Throughout opera, the “Cynic,” while part of the sextet is set
apart, singing to audience as an observer or commentator. The sextet represents the different
constituencies in the square.*

THE PIOUS (*hymn-like*):

Allah is great,

For him we wait.

For him we wait.

(Repeat in Arabic)

THE YOUTH (*jazzy*):

Tweet, tweet, it is sweet

Let us meet

All day and night. Let's show our might.

We love our chits and chats

For we are the technocrats.

Commiserate and supplicate;

Aggregate and innovate,

Never hesitate or procrastinate.

For we are the techocrats

And, of course, the democrats.

THE MILITANT (*conspiratorial and threatening*):

No one's looking now,

Here's our chance for

Mayhem.

That's the way

To get even with the heathen.

POVERTY (lamentation/dirge) holding on to child:

There is no food to feed my child,

Who begs with ragged clothes,

Do you know what it's like

When your child must

Beg in the streets

From strangers he meets?

Do you know what it's like to see

How others live and play each day?

THE PATRIOT (patriotic/optimistic, soaring):

A new day is coming.

A new beginning.

Free from woes

And tyranny's blows.

Soon the day will come

When we are paid for work that's done

And no longer work is given

To those driven
Who fawn at our leader's every whim
And from that day, our freedom will begin.

THE CYNIC:

Things do not change so fast,
The future is rooted in the past.

SEXTET (repeating above solos) AND CHORUS

THE PIOUS (hymn-like):

Allah is great, Allah is great,
For you we wait.
Heaven is our reward, heaven is our reward.
(Repeat in Arabic)

THE MILITANT (conspiratorial and threatening):

No one's looking now,
Here's our chance for
Mayhem.
That's the way
To get even with the heathen.

THE YOUTH (jazzy):

Tweet, tweet, it is sweet
Let us meet
All day and night. Let's show
our might.

We love our chits and chats
For we are computer hacks.
Commiserate and supplicate;
Aggregate and innovate,
Never hesitate or procrastinate.
For we are the young computer hacks
And, of course, the democrats.

POVERTY (lamentation/dirge) holding on to a child:

There is no food to feed my child,
Who begs with ragged clothes,
Do you know what it's like
When your child must
Beg in the street
From strangers they meet?
Do you know what it's like to see
How others live and play each day?

THE CYNIC:

Things do not change so fast,
The future is rooted in the past.

CHORUS OF PROTESTORS:

(Saraband or Cabaletta)

We gather for peace, for breathing space,
We will stay day and night,

**The PATRIOT (patriotic/optimistic/
soaring):**

A new day is coming.
A new beginning.
Free at last.
Free from woes.
And tyranny's blows.
Soon the day will come
When we are paid for work that's done
And no longer work is given
To those driven
Who fawn at our leader's every
whim.
And from that day, our freedom will
begin.

It is our right.

We will stay today and everyday.

We will sing; we will dance,

It is our only chance for

Freedom here, freedom near,

Freedom here, freedom near

Fade

Scene IV (Stage is split with Palace in background with President speaking from lectern, to the protestors In foreground, Tahir Square filled with protestors watching President on large outdoor screen.)

PRESIDENT (*paternalistic*):

My children, why do you to treat me this way,

I am your father

Who took you from medieval times.

I am your savior; no violence

Ruled the streets

Except to keep

The unruly ones at bay.

Or would you prefer to pray night and day?

I gave you certainty – stability

No longer would you fear the unknown

No longer would you be alone.

You knew where I stood

Always, for Egypt's good.

For as you know, I too led a revolt

In the streets – aiming to change things

For the better.

And if I stayed too long,

Perhaps I did not know where to go,

What to do.

For power is held on to

Not only for the adoration

From a nation

Not only for the trappings

And the bowing and the scraping,

Not only for the ease by which

Every thought turns to action.

No, that is not it at all.

It is the fear of what follows

After the mantle is hollow

With you no more.

To whom must you smile

What are the rules?

Must you suffer fools?

Are you looked upon with

Pity or just curiosity?

So many decades have gone by

How does one start life anew?

My children, go home, sleep well,

My children, sleep well.

CHORUS/PROTESTORS: (crescendo)

Leave, you must go.

(Repeat in Arabic)

PRESIDENT:

I am old, I want but a few months more

A few months before I go,

Then, I will leave you to your fate,

(Then, with defiance)

But you must know,

I will lead and protect you

Until that date.

CHORUS/PROTESTORS:

We are not children you can order,

Children we are no more

You ask for time –

A few months more

No! It will be years of tears,

There is no more time.

DUET (same as solos above)

PRESIDENT:

I am old, I want but a few months more

A few months before I go,

Then, I will leave you to your fate,

(With defiance)

But you must know,

I will lead and protect you

Until that date.

CHORUS:

We are not children you can order,

Children we are no more

You ask for time –

A few months more

No! It will be years of tears.

There is no more time.

POVERTY (with child):

You ask for time

While I beg food for my child,

While I beg for clothes to keep him warm,

While I beg for gas to heat our place

While I beg for work

My child shivers

In my arms.

He is out of time,

So too are you.

Military Quartet:

To President:

We are true to you.

Solid and true

(Aside) But sooner or later,

It's about us, not you.

QUINTET

POVERTY (with child):

You ask for time

While I beg food for my child,

While I beg for clothes to keep him warm,

While I beg for gas to heat our place

While I beg for work

My child shivers.

MILITARY QUARTET:

To President:

We are true to you.

We are solid and true.

(Aside) But sooner or later,

It's about us, not you.

In my arms.

He is out of time,

So too are you.

- INTERMISSION -

ACT II, Scene I

(Stage opens to protestors in Tahir Square)

(The next lines are sung conspiratorially, quickly, whispering.)

CHORUS/PROTESTORS (rhythmic/swaying):

He won't leave.

We don't believe

He will ever leave.

But we will wait him out

And stay every night

Till the end is in sight

Militant (Argumentative):

Let's charge the Palace. Take our chance.

Youth:

The tanks are still. They do no ill.

Patriot:

The camera's on us. Don't make a fuss.

Give no reason

To accuse treason.

Militant:

The tanks are still; let us take our chance.

Youth:

Then keep them still.

Patriot:

Quiet is the word.

Not a harsh word to be heard.

Don't give excuse

For violence.

We see light ahead,

Let's keep our head.

The tanks are still.

Keep them away.

The Pious:

Allah is great.

Pray, pray, pray.

The Youth:

Let's all meet, no retreat.

The Militant:

Now's our chance to advance.

Poverty:

Beg. Weep. That's my life.

The Patriot:

We shall overcome . . .

The Cynic: (to audience)

What did you expect? For tyranny to end – so easily?

SEXTET WITH CHORUS

THE PIOUS:

Allah is great.

THE YOUTH:

Let's all meet, no retreat.

THE MILITANT:

Now's our chance to advance.

Pray, pray, pray.

POVERTY:

Beg. Weep. That's my life.

THE PATRIOT:

We shall overcome...

THE CYNIC:

What did you expect?

For tyranny to end – so easily?

CHORUS/PROTESTORS (rhythmic/swaying):

He doesn't intend to leave.

We don't believe

He will ever leave.

And stay every night until

The end is in sight.

Fade

(Spotlight on Akila and Tarik in house on square)

AKILA (looking out window):

Father, I leave you now,

It's peaceful there.

Quiet singing in the square.

Do you hear father dear?

Your comrades of yesteryear

Are standing by.

My betrothed is in the square.

I am safe when he is there.

TARIK:

Stay with me here.

AKILA:

My father, I must go.

Egypt, needs me so.

(Akila runs from house to square into arms of Hamadi.)

AKILA: (To Hamadi with sympathy, and also anger)

How can you support this tyrant,

In his employ

Protecting, sheltering, warning,

Supporting him

Agreeing to his every whim

Making the world

Safe for him.

HAMADI:

I cannot breathe.
My mind doth seethe
With unsuredness, with guilt
Over allegiance to my leader
What will you have me do,
But I am torn, for my duty and my oath
To protect him clouds my spirit
As my tongue and acts
Support him by my oath
While my heart is yours alone.
You, who I cannot live without.

AKILA:

I know you cannot choose
I know all too well the
Pain that I have caused
My father dear – he, too, will lose
When I choose.

CHORUS OF PROTESTORS (*Egyptian Saraband or cavatina*):

The world is watching,
We raise our hands to dance, not in defiance;
We raise our voices to sing, not shout.
The world watches

To see what we are about.

We raise our hands to dance.

Not in defiance

But just to dance.

HAMADI: *(To Akila, Love Song.)*

I must leave now, my love

As you sing and dance,

For all is peaceful in the square.

And later, when this is over,

To the desert we will go

And feast on dates and grapes

And raisins in the glow of the sun.

And later, when this is over, to the desert we will go

And drink tea

Under the stars.

And later, when this is over,

To the desert we will go

And lightly sleep the night away

Til the break of day

(Repeat in Arabic from

“And later when this is over”)

DUET

AKILA:

And later, when this is over,

To the desert we will go

And feast on dates and grapes

And raisins in the glow of the sun.

And later, when this is over, to the desert we will go

And drink tea

Under the stars

And later, when this is over,

To the desert we will go

And lightly sleep the night away

Til the break of day.

HAMADI:

And later, when this is over,

To the desert we will go

And feast on dates and grapes

And raisins in the glow of the sun.

And later, when this is over, to the desert we will go

And drink tea

Under the stars

And later, when this is over,

To the desert we will go

And lightly sleep the night away

Til the break of day.

(They part; Hamadi leaves with military. Same Sinuous dancing as from beginning of Act. Then, abruptly, Violent Cacophonous music. A dozen hoodlums stream in, carrying bats, clubs, swords; From the roofs of buildings around the square, fire bombs are thrown. Wild mêlée. Protestors pummeled. Sirens, ambulances. Stones. Mayhem. Many injured. Music and fighting should take about two to three minutes.)

CYNIC (Sings over music):

Peace here does not happen so fast,
What happens today is rooted in the past.
First freedom, then anarchy,
Then the Man on the Pale White Horse comes –
And lo, he brings us. . . “stability.”

(Protestors form a wall of interlocking arms. It does no good as hoodlums break through.)

HOODLUM QUARTET (one voice):

We do our job. We rape and rob.
We'll break your spirit,
We know our job, we rape and rob.
We do it well

(Reprise)

We do our job. We rape and rob.
We'll break your spirit,
We know our job, we rape and rob.
We do it well

(Well dressed men and women walking by (possibly puppets), unmolested, despite melee and violence. They are part of the establishment, clearly not protestors and are not the object of the “hoodlums’ “ attacks.)

THE PRIVILEGED (*TRIO with one voice*):

What's the fuss; surely it's not about us.

It's got out of hand. Not good for our land.

Our children are schooled with the best

in France and Britain, in the West

We send them to private places

Away from these haggard faces. (pointing to Poverty)

What do we care if a few

Are chained to a prison wall?

It serves them right

For threatening us.

So, let things be,

Our leader has been very good for you and me.

CYNIC:

Your children, doctors and lawyers they may be

But, if they return, even with your power

They'll still

Drive a taxi, hour by hour.

(Hoodlums let the Privileged go by.)

POVERTY *(lament to small child):*

Here by the river I sit and weep

For my child dear,

And make it deeper by a tear.

And if and when he survives

He will be scarred

With hatred which will mar him so

He will be all too willing to put in motion

The devil's retribution.

(Poverty is pushed aside as attack continues. News cameras record everything. Music pulsating. Bedlam. Akila tries to protect child in melee. Hoodlum slashes at protestors with sword and wounds Akila who falls. Violent music, then – total silence.)

AKILA:

Oh Egypt, land of my birth, land of my mirth, mother of the earth,

Land of my death.

Why did you take away my breath.

I only threw petals in the street,

I only threw petals in the street.

(she rises, staggering)

Oh, to see the Nile, shimmering in the sunset

For a while, once more. . .

My eyes cloud over.

Where is the Nile?

(Father comes rushing from house to comfort and hold daughter. At same time, her betrothed, Hamadi, comes rushing in. She sings a dirge/lament.)

Who will remember me?

I have no immortality;

I leave nothing at all.

No songs, no poems, no children,

No place in history.

I will hardly be a memory,

Forgotten in a few days

Except for those who knew me well.

And for them, perhaps, for a few years

Until they too are no more.

I leave nothing to remember me.

I leave nothing to change the lives

Of those I've left behind.

Perhaps a plaque to honor this day

Seen on a wall by tourists

Years from now, they will read with

Unseeing eyes about this square. Not a tear will fall

Beneath that wall.

Akila does not exist for them,

Or for anyone. I will never again eat dates and raisins in the sun.

I die

Like a breath, one of many,

Unobserved, unremembered,

Not even with a sigh.

(She dies as Child of Poverty stares, wandering around in daze.)

HAMADI (softly):

Egypt, you took her life.

She did you no harm

Petals in the street.

Sweet, sweet. . .sweet.

TARIK:

Let me warm thee, touch thee, see thee

One more time

Let me feel thee, hold thee, care for thee

One more time.

My only child, Akila. . .is. . .no. . .more.

(DIRGE)

(Tarik takes off his threadbare military coat and covers Akila; Hamadi is distraught. Akila is lifted to Dirge. Child wanders around lost. All leave to slow dance, except those dead or wounded in square. Wailing by women (with tongue ululation), rising, crescendo-like, cutting through music in background. No movement on stage. Silence. No music. Square is scene of devastation.) Then, sextet reappears, one by one, slowly. Wounded.

THE PIOUS:

Allah is great, Allah is great,

We deserve what we get.

We sing, we dance, we drink.

We teach today

That Allah is not the way;

But only Allah will bring us peace,

Prayer alone protects us from police.

(Repeat in Arabic)

THE YOUTH:

We survived those hoodlums,

We didn't fight back.

The cameras caught us

Beaten to the dust.

If we must

We will stay forever.

Our cause is just,

MILITANT: (surreptitiously)

No one is watching now,

We blend right in;

We'll wrap ourselves in plastique. That is our mystique.

No one is watching now. We will keep

Our weapons secret

Until that day.

Not far away, we'll use them . . . here?

Or maybe elsewhere? A crowded station?

Another nation?

A football game?

Ah, that would bring us fame.

POVERTY:

To you (point to audience), I am invisible;

Your eyes always avoid the miserable.

PATRIOT:

It's all matter of wills you know

He wants to stay; we want him to go.

And as for humiliation,

It's little price to pay,

For the harm to our nation.

He deprived us of dignity. He murdered many;

Tens of thousands in prison, cold, alone, afraid.

That's what he did to have his way.

As for humiliation,

Look what he did to our nation.

(Reprise below with five of sextet singing lines from each of their solos. No chorus here.)

QUINTET

THE PIOUS:

Only Allah will bring us peace,

Prayer alone protects us from police.

THE YOUTH:

Our cause is just,

Win we must.

THE MILITANT:

We'll wrap ourselves in plastique. That is
our mystique.

No one is watching now. We will keep

We are so near. We have no fear.

Our weapons in secret

Until that day.

POVERTY:

To you (point to audience), I am invisible;

Your eyes always avoid the miserable.

PATRIOT:

He deprived us of dignity. He murdered many;

Tens of thousands of thousands in prison, cold, alone, afraid.

That's what he did to have his way.

TRIO OF REPORTERS AND CAMERA MEN (*one voice*):

We're here to report the news,

To record all views

From the protestors in the street,

To the military we meet,

We put it on the air

Fair and square.

They say we are the cause of riots,

That if not for us

There would be no fuss,

That we have emboldened but the few

For democracy.

Well, what here we see are

Signs for liberty,

And thugs running amok,

And that's what you will see

On tonight's TV.

(Military marches back to Square.)

MILITARY GUARD QUARTET (March):

(To protestors)

You told us not to intervene;

You begged us to be still.

You praised us to the skies,

You gave us flowers

To stand on the sides.

We let them dance

And do their thing.

We let them gather in the square,

We are their heroes, just like

When we battled the Israelis.

(Pointing to Protestors)

And if some bullies rough you up a bit

Well. . . . so. . . . so

We're noncombatants, you know.

CYNIC:

We will see

What will be.

- Pause –

(Musical interlude to introduce following scene)

ACT II, Scene II

Presidential Palace

PRESIDENT (PLAINTIVE, SLOW, MANIPULATIVE):

Oh Egypt

Why have you forsaken me

In this hour dire, what do you require?

For many years

I kept you safe

From enemies of the state.

I could do no less than clear the air

Of those who sought to tear you

Limb from limb.

I have protected you

From far worse evils that beset you.

Egypt, why do you forsake me?

Why do you humiliate me so?

My friends turn away,

My enemies wish me to die

Stripped naked of decency.

Where is thy clemency?

A few months more,

More or less, That's all. Soon I die.

On Egypt's soil I wish to die,

Oh Egypt, where is thy clemency.

A few months more –

More or less, That's all. Soon I die.

On Egypt's soil, I wish to die with decency .

Reprise – In Arabic)

(Aide ushers in a Representative of U.S.)

PRESIDENT:

Oh, it's you, coming to tell me what to do?

U.S. (dressed in red, white, blue costume):

Hello, my friend. This is the end.

You should have gone when you had a chance

To hold your head up high,

But now it's too late to say good-bye

With dignity. That's all I have to say

You must go away.

PRESIDENT (Sarcastic):

What, no lessons on democracy?

Is what you want theocracy?

So many dictators

Across the earth, you seem to value all their worth.

Why me?

U.S.

You must leave my friend. It's time to go.

PRESIDENT:

And what will you do

When revolt is brewing

In places where

Democracy isn't ruling?

And the oil stops flowing,

When shortages and prices are growing,

And you no longer on a whim

Can "Fill it to the brim."

What will you do then?

And after all the votes are counted, with hoopla and hurrah,
Exactly how will you greet, the winner – Hezbollah.

(A second visitor (Saudi) is ushered in.)

Saudi:

Alakem, my friend

Wait a while, wait a while,

They will soon tire of dancing in the street.

They will tire of tweet, tweet.

DUET

Saudi:

Wait them out.

We will support you

They will soon tire of

Dancing in the street.

They will tire of tweet, tweet.

U.S.:

It's time for you to go, you know,

Before things begin to blow;

It's time for you to go my friend,

This is the end.

(A third visitor is ushered in - Israeli)

PRESIDENT:

Shalom, my friend.

What have you to say? (with sarcasm)

“Why is this night different from all other nights?”

ISRAELI:

You gave us breathing space.

And that wasn't easy.

But, we cannot tell you what to do,

For we are fearful of vacuums too as

The unknown brings terror

In the night.

No time is right

For trial and error.

TRIO (solos from above)

U.S.:

It's time to go my friend,

This is the end. It's time to go.

This is the end my friend,

Sing yourself this little ditty,

Or in the history books you'll get no pity.

“I let my people go; I let my people go.”

Saudi:

Wait a while, wait a while.

They will soon tire of dancing in the street. And that wasn't easy.

They will tire of tweet, tweet., etc.

Israeli:

You gave us breathing space.

And that wasn't easy.

But, we cannot tell you what to do,

For we are fearful of vacuums too as

The unknown brings terror

In the night.

No time is right

For trial and error.

(They leave. As they leave, enter Military Quartet – March – slow, funereal, but determined)

MILITARY QUARTET *(to President):*

It's not about you; it's about us.

We want our due. Please no fuss.

No bother. Make it easy on yourself.

Too much attention now is paid on what we do.

It's not about you; it's about us.

We own the state. We have a stake

To keep it that way.

Our children won't leave, they are at the gates

And you must know

We cannot sweep our children into the street.

The world is watching, seeing every move.

We cannot sweep our children into the street,

Their blood we will not shed,

There's no sense asking for our head,

We will not sweep our children into the street,

It's time to go my friend.

(President reluctantly goes to desk, writes, hands letter of resignation to an aide. First, self pitying, then in defiance.)

PRESIDENT:

My Egypt why have you forsaken me?

Why do you humiliate me so?

My friends look away,

My enemies wish me to die

Stripped naked of decency.

My Egypt, where is thy clemency?

(In quiet retrospection)

Ah, there is no stair below

I step into empty air,

Nothing to catch me as I fall

No one to hear me call

No one to salute me,

Care for me,

Remember me

As I fall.

Your leader is no more.

(Then, in defiance)

A plague on your houses, you will regret my leaving.

I should have snapped the bud before

And left them grieving.

Paint them all as Brotherhood.

(To military)

Imprison them all.

My only regret?

In darkness and chains

More were not kept.

(President leaves room – defiant)

Fade

ACT II, Scene III

Square *(Loud Speaker announces: “THE SUPREME MILITARY COMMAND WISHES TO ANNOUNCE THE RESIGNATION”. . . Chorus and music drowns out rest of announcement)*

(Crowd jubilant; flags, Egyptian dance)

CHORUS OF PROTESTORS:

We are free now from tyranny’s past,

Like desert sands

We move unhindered by our past.

We can breathe,

Our hearts are full

With tears of joy, we will remember

This day forever.

THE PIOUS (solos below by each member of sextet):

Praise to Allah, pray to Allah

He delivered, and we will rule

The school where children play and pray.

We will rule the school and teach the way,

And we will tend the sick

And the people will love us for our service.

There's no reason to be nervous -

A new day is dawning.

Veil your face, woman!

A new day is dawning,

Veil your face, woman!

THE YOUTH:

The batteries are dead, let's go to bed

It's our revolt you know;

We made it so.

Now we're in. Just ask CNN,

Just ask CNN.

Who is our leader?

Does it matter?

MILITANT:

They (*to youth*) always felt superior,

But, we'll take the Ministry of the Interior.

(Repeat)

POVERTY:

Where is my bread?

Does this mean I have a bed

After all is said?

This democracy? Will it feed the poor?

Do the wounds disappear?

Are they no more?

THE PATRIOT (*sings one or two lines from each with sarcasm*):

God save the Queen

Oh say can you see

Waltzing Matilda

Va Pensiero

The Internationale

Emperor Quartet (Haydn)

Marseilles

Triumphal March (Aida)

(Aside to audience)

Does it really matter

They all sound good to me

THE CYNIC (with sarcasm):

We will wait and see,

The cost of electricity.

No gas, no oil here,

But have no fear,

The generals are here,

Let's wait and see.

We have our history:

Aristocracy, anarchy, then. . . "stability" –

Enforced, of course.

Democracy? Let's wait and see.

SEXTET, from above, AND CHORUS

PIOUS:

Praise to Allah, pray to Allah

He delivered, and we will rule

The school where children play and pray.

THE YOUTH:

It's our revolt you know;

We made it so.

We're in. Just ask CNN,

MILITANT:

They (to youth) always felt superior,

But, we'll take the Ministry of the

Interior.

We will rule the school and teach them the way,

Just ask CNN.

Who is our leader?

Does It matter?

POVERTY:

Where is my bread?

Does this mean I have a bed

After all is said?

THE PATRIOT:

Waltzing Matilda

Va Pensiero

The Internationale

THE CYNIC:

Let's wait and see.

We have our history:

Aristocracy, anarchy, then..."stability" - With tears of joy, we will

Enforced, of course.

Democracy? Let's wait and see.

CHORUS:

We are free now, we can breathe,

Our hearts are full with liberty,

This day forever.

remember

CHORUS/PROTESTORS:

(Song of Jubilation)

We did it with no one's help,

We shed our blood,

And cried and sighed and died for Egypt's honor,

The tyrant's gone.

We will feed our poor.

We will end our feuds and mend our fences,

We will shelter our children,

We will sing of Egypt's honor,

We have won

With help from no one.

The day is ours.

The flowers, ours.

(Then, silence)

(Slowly, Tarik, President, Hamadi and a prisoner behind bars appear at opposite corners of stage.)

(Each does Solo first below (same words/different melody/rhythm) then reprise as a Quartet)

TARIK (mournful):

I have lost the light of my life,
The light in my eye, the light of my life,
I have lost the light of my life
I have lost the light in my eye.
Where I go, all will know
I have lost the light of my life

PRESIDENT (arrogant):

I have lost the light of my life,
The light in my eye, the light of my life,
I have lost the light of my life
I have lost the light in my eye,
Where I go, all will know
I have lost the light of my life

HAMADI (love song):

I have lost the light of my life,
The light in my eye, the light of my life,
I have lost the light of my life
I have lost the light in my eye,
Where I go, all will know
I have lost the light of my life

PRISONER (anger):

I have lost the light of my life,
The light in my eye, the light of my life,
I have lost the light of my life
I have lost the light in my eye.
Where I go, all will know
I have lost the light of my life

(Reprise of above in Arabic of full Quartet)

CHORUS/PROTESTORS (in Square):

Half of Chorus hums a sad, poignant, sinuous Egyptian melody, leaves slowly to left.

The other half leaves, right side, singing and dancing to joyous Egyptian melody.

The cynic observes. Shrugs. He cannot tell which way Egypt will go. Child wanders – lost.

In background women wail (with tongue - ululating) slowly trailing off until stage empties.

- Curtain –

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