

ACT ONE

*It is a tense period during the Ottoman Empire. The year is not important.
The Sultan is called Levent.*

*A salon in the palace. Behind the transparent tulle that is to be used
instead of a theatre curtain, the Sultan sitting on his throne and girls
distributing drinks can be seen. Ottoman music is played.*

Someone comes out in front of the curtain in period costume and says:

Ladies and gentlemen of the audience, it is a tense period in the Ottoman
Empire. If it is not too much trouble for you, let us watch Sultan Levent.

Friday afternoon was dragging on,
And all the Sultan's energy was gone.

He sat, surrounded by his concubines,
Gazelle-eyed girls who served him sweets and wines.

A spread so lavish he had to rest his eyes—
And promptly fell asleep with snores and sighs.

The hours passed, but finally he woke;
A gulp of *koumiss* helped throw off sleep's yoke.

His odalisques enticed him to the hammam;
They frolicked with him, sang sweet songs and swam.

But this is how a sultan spends his time:
Among the fountains and *houris* of a distant clime.

*The curtain rises. The First Vizier, the Second Vizier and the Treasurer
enter; the servants exit; after they have finished the ritual kissing of the
Sultan's hand and hem of his robe, the Sultan gets up from his throne.*

THE TREASURY'S IN A FRIGHTFUL SITUATION

SULTAN: My loyal servants,
I'm listening to you...

FIRST VIZIER: A princess has come
With a cartload of gold.
You're world-famous,
So she wanted to see you.
Her greatest desire
Was to greet you herself.

SECOND VIZIER: We want to foster a bond
Of friendship and love
Between ourselves and the Princedom.
If it should prove too taxing,
Then death to those damned infidels!

SULTAN: Your words are intriguing,
But why are you telling me this?

TREASURER: Between here and Byzantium,
Hardly an hour away,
Lies a large principality.
Our reports inform us
It's bursting with beauty
And bountiful riches.

FIRST VIZIER: If it pleases Your Majesty,
The princess awaits...

SULTAN: I want to know more—
This woman from Greece:



Who's she related to?
How is her lineage?
Is she really a princess
And not a royal-looking spy
Who'll pretend to be with us
But tell all she sees
To her infidel friends?
It's too awful to think of!
Go and investigate.
Get me the facts.
Come back and bring me the truth.

They are surprised at the Sultan's response. They steal glances at one another.

TREASURER: She's definitely noble!
She's nine generations
More blue-blooded than the Empress.

SULTAN: Nine generations, really?

FIRST VIZIER: It's not her bloodline that counts,
It's her bullion that's important!
Remember, her father's
A mega-rich prince.
He's palace after palace
Paved with gold
And lamps lavished with rubies.

SECOND VIZIER: And charming artwork
From China and Japan.
If you ask for her hand,
(She'll inherit the lot!)
We'll all be rich!