



The Trusted Thief

Readers Theater Play Script and Performance Notes

AUTHORS: Leslie Spurrier, COUNTRY: Turkey, GENRE: Folktales



CHARACTERS

NARRATOR

DUSTMAN

FEMALE VILLAGER #1

FEMALE VILLAGER #2

FEMALE VILLAGER #3

MALE VILLAGER #1

MALE VILLAGER #2

MALE VILLAGER #3

CADI

EMIN

ZEKI

SERVANT #1 (no speaking lines)

SERVANT #2 (no speaking lines)

SCARF PEDDLAR (no speaking lines)

VEGETABLE PEDDLAR (no speaking lines)

LADI

LADI'S SERVANT

If there are performance notes, they can be found on the pages following the script

Scene 1 – Dustman’s Home

[**Stage Set:** Turkey, many years ago. The stage is divided into three sections. The first section is DUSTMAN's home. It is a small sparse room with a rug on the floor, a small table, a chair on top of the rug, and a large cooking pot on the table. In the middle of the stage is a village market scene- more on that later. The third section is CADI's house. A "Cadi" was a judge,]

[NARRATOR enters.]

NARRATOR:

Hello, everyone. Welcome to “The Dustman and the Cadi,” from Turkey. So you're wondering - what's a "dustman"? It's what years ago they used to call a trash man – probably because of the dust. And a "cadi" (pronounce: KAH-dee) – that meant a judge. So the title, “Dustman and the Cadi” means a trash man and a judge. This story is brought to you by *Stories to Grow by*.

[NARRATOR steps forward.]

NARRATOR:

Long ago in a city called Stamboul - that same city is now called Istanbul - there once lived a hard-working dustman. A trashman, remember?

[DUSTMAN enters. He wears shabby clothes and carries a small bag of coins. He sets the bag on the table.]

DUSTMAN:

I have good news and I have bad news.

NARRATOR:

His good news is that over many years he has saved 500 silver coins.

DUSTMAN:

500 silver coins! Finally there's enough to take home to my wife and family, and provide for them for life.

NARRATOR:

He had been working hard for years. And as the Turkish saying goes, “There is no love like a mother’s, nor a place like your homeland.” Now, the bad news.

DUSTMAN:

My savings could get stolen before I earn enough to travel back home. I must find a place to keep my coins safe till then!

[DUSTMAN looks around the room, then looks under the rug.]

DUSTMAN:

I cannot keep it there. That is the first place a thief would look! (*looks in the cooking pot*) I cannot keep it there. Surely that is the second place a thief would look! (*to the audience*) I know what I'll do! I'll separate it into different piles and put a small pile in each place!

[DUSTMAN sits at the table and opens then bag of coins. He rubs his hands together, as if ready to sort the coins into piles. Then he stops and frowns.]

DUSTMAN:

But what am I thinking? If a thief finds one pile, he'll stop at nothing to find the rest! (*stands up*) I have no choice but to keep my silver coins on me at all times until I figure out a safe place to put them. (*puts the bag of coins under his jacket and begins to walk*) Though they do jangle.

[DUSTMAN picks up his broom and exits the scene and walks out of his "house" to the middle of the stage, a village market scene.]

Scene 2 - Village market

[**Stage set:** An outdoor, middle-eastern market scene is at the center of the stage. Two tables are set up with goods - one has scarves and the other has vegetables. (**See Performance Notes** on how to set up the tables.)]

[SCARF PEDDLER and VEGETABLE PEDDLER enter and stand behind their tables. FEMALE VILLAGER, #1, FEMALE VILLAGER #2, and FEMALE VILLAGER #3 enter and surround the vegetable table. They hold baskets and pantomime making purchases.]

[DUSTMAN enters.]

DUSTMAN:

I can't look obvious that I'm holding all this (*whispers to audience*) you-know-what. (*returns to regular voice*) I just have to be really, REALLY careful as I go about my work.

[DUSTMAN sweeps around the FEMALE VILLAGERS, listening closely.]

FEMALE VILLAGER #1:

So I couldn't believe it.

FEMALE VILLAGER #2:

I know what you mean. He almost got away with it!

FEMALE VILLAGER #1:

Sometimes I think the Cadi (pronounce: KAY-dee) is the only honest man in the village.

FEMALE VILLAGER #3:

Oh, I KNOW the Cadi is the only honest man in the village.

FEMALE VILLAGER #3:

(*points to table of scarves*) Will you look at those silk scarves? They're gorgeous!

FEMALE VILLAGER #1:

Totally you! Let's take a look.

FEMALE VILLAGER #2:

Love the edgings. Fringes are the new beads.

[FEMALE VILLAGERS move to the scarf table. DUSTMAN stops sweeping and considers their remarks. MALE VILLAGERS enter, talking to each other.]

MALE VILLAGER #1:

The thief insisted my goats were his, so I decided to have the matter settled by the Cadi.

MALE VILLAGER #2:

(nods) Good move. What did he do?

MALE VILLAGER #1:

He asked the thief to call the goats as if it were feeding time. The joker called for them twice, but not a single goat turned his way. Then the Cadi asked me to call them. I whistled once, like this *(it's good if the actor can whistle)* and they came running. My goats know MY whistle.

MALE VILLAGER #3:

(slaps his knee) Ha, ha! We're lucky to have such a judge in our village.

[MALE VILLAGERS chuckle together as they exit. DUSTMAN stops sweeping again and looks at the audience.]

DUSTMAN:

That's it! The Cadi is the most trusted man in the city. HE'll know what to do with my coins!

[All actors other than DUSTMAN exit.]

Scene 3 – Cadi’s Home

[**Stage set:** Two large decorative urns mark the “entrance” to the Cadi's home, which is on the opposite side of the stage from the Dustman's home in Scene 1. A long, narrow rug runner leads to a large decorated chair. (See **Performance Notes** on how to make urns/statues and how to decorate the chair.)]

[CADI enters and sits in the chair. DUSTMAN approaches the two urns and stands there, dazed.]

DUSTMAN:

(bumbling) Oh, worthy Cadi, your most excellent...Excellency. Forgive me for interrupting you from your...uh...excellent work. And forgive me for coming before you in this old robe and sandals. I come with highest reverence and respect because in all of Stamboul there is no name more...uh...excellent than yours.

CADI:

I get it, I get it! Are you coming in?

DUSTMAN:

I come to humbly ask a favor...uh... *(bows deeply)*, your Excellency.

CADI:

So come in already, and ask away.

DUSTMAN:

Thank you, kind sir! Your Honor! *(approaches Cadi & clears throat)* Your Excellency, I have worked hard to save 500 silver coins for my wife and children, who live far away.

CADI:

Have you, now?

DUSTMAN:

Yes. But I fear my treasure might be stolen. And then where would I be? I still need to work a couple of years more to earn my passage back home.

CADI:

All right..

DUSTMAN:

(pauses) And so would you, great Cadi, look after my coins?

CADI:

Oh! Look after your coins? *(turns to audience, rub palms together, and gives a wicked smile)* No

problem! (*turns to Dustman*) Why yes, you may leave your treasure with me. Have no fear. When you're ready, simply come back and ask for it. I can assure you not a single coin will be missing.

DUSTMAN:

(*overcome with joy*) Oh! Thank you! You are truly excellent, Your Excellency! Thank you! I knew I made a wise choice. I knew you would be most honorable!

[DUSTMAN hands his coins to CADI. DUSTMAN backs down the long rug and out between the two urns, bumping into one of them and knocking it over. He is startled, alarmed, sets it back up again, and, feeling jittery, moves toward the Village Market and freezes until PEDDLERS enter.]

Scene 4 - Village Market

[Stage Set: as in Scene 2.]

[PEDDLERS enter and stand behind their tables. They pantomime talking to one another.]

[DUSTMAN unfreezes.]

[NARRATOR enters.]

NARRATOR:

What a load off his mind! Our Dustman is thinking nothing could be better than this.

[EMIN and ZEKI enter.]

DUSTMAN:

Emin (eh-MEEN)! Zeki (zee-KEY)! What a surprise!

EMIN:

So good to see you, my old friend!

ZEKI:

It's been years!

DUSTMAN:

Ah, you must tell me the news from our home village.

EMIN:

That would take a long time! Tell you what, we're headed back there right now.

DUSTMAN:

Really?

ZEKI:

Care to join us? The journey travels faster with good talk.

DUSTMAN:

What luck! I was going to have to work a long time more to earn my passage home. But if I go home with you, I can leave for home today!

ZEKI:

Why wait? Let's all go!

DUSTMAN:

Great! Ah, but there's just one thing I must do. Would you wait a few minutes, please?

EMIN:

No problem. Do what you need to. I should probably buy one of those new scarves to take home to my wife.

[EMIN goes over to the scarves table. ZEKI follows EMIN, then turns to DUSTMAN.]

ZEKI:

Go in peace, our friend.

[ZEKI joins EMIN at the scarves table. They freeze.]

Scene 5 – Cadi’s Home

[Stage Set: as in Scene 3.]

[DUSTMAN tries to contain his joy as he walks/runs through the urns and down the aisle carpet. CADI notices DUSTMAN, bristles with surprise, and then looks off into the distance.]

DUSTMAN:

(out of breath and excited) Wonderful news, Your Excellency! Amazin luck! I met some friends from my home village. They are headed back home, today! So I have come to collect my coins and...

CADI:

(interrupts, in a fury) SILENCE! How dare you barge into my house! Who ARE you?

DUSTMAN:

What? I mean... of course, it is I, *(bows deeply)* your Excellency.

CADI:

You barge into my house AND you dare to talk about collecting coins?

DUSTMAN:

Surely you remember, Excellency? I was here only earlier this very day. You must remember..? I left my fortune with you...?

CADI:

I have no idea what you're talking about. You have some nerve – bursting in here and claiming I somehow owe you money. I never saw you before in my life. Get out of my house before I have you arrested! Servants!

[SERVANT #1 and SERVANT #2 enter. They each take one arm of the DUSTMAN and drag him down the rug, giving him a shove past the urns and to the village market section of the stage. Note: be gentle - this is pretend! SERVANTS leave DUSTMAN sitting on the ground, dejected. SERVANTS exit. CADI exits.]

Scene 6 - Village Market

[Stage set: as in Scene 2.]

[DUSTMAN sits on the ground looking confused and forlorn. EMIN and ZEKI enter and rush over to DUSTMAN. They help him stand up. DUSTMAN brushes his trousers and loudly sighs.]

EMIN:

What happened?

ZEKI:

You all right?

DUSTMAN:

(sadly) I am sorry, my brothers. It is not to be that I should leave with you today. My lot is to stay here in Stamboul after all. For a long time.

EMIN:

What happened?

ZEKI:

You can tell us!

DUSTMAN:

Ah, if only I could!

ZEKI:

Whatever it is, I see there's nothing to be done. Our friend, we will miss traveling with you! Perhaps we will meet again at home, before too long.

DUSTMAN:

I'm afraid that's not likely to happen. I must stay here, in Stamboul. For a long time.

[They hug sadly. DUSTMAN exits, completely dejected. EMIN and ZEKI exit. DUSTMAN resumes sweeping. He moans loudly.]

NARRATOR:

Our poor Dustman! He discovered the truth of the Turkish proverb: "You cannot forge a good sword from bad iron." So bitterly disappointed is he now, so broken in spirit, that as he goes about his work he moans and sighs, often wiping away a tear. Is there no relief to be had? After all, another proverb says, "Kind words can unlock an iron door."

[DUSTMAN sets down his broom and sits, moaning. LADI enters. She is a well-dressed Turkish lady. (See **Performance Notes** for costume suggestions.)]

LADI:

Dear Dustman,. Why do you cry so?

DUSTMAN:

(moans) My lady, it is not for a poor dustman like me to share my troubles with a refined lady like yourself. *(pauses for two seconds, and then launches ahead)* But if you really want to know...

LADI:

Why not? Go ahead.

DUSTMAN:

It is the Cadi!

LADI:

The Cadi? What happened?

DUSTMAN:

(feeling sheepish) Well, my lady, over many years I saved 500 silver coins.

LADI:

Oh, my!

DUSTMAN:

To provide for my dear wife and children, who live far away, and to return home to them.

LADI:

Of course. How admirable.

DUSTMAN:

Ah, my bag of silver coins! I remember it so well. It feels like just yesterday when I still had it in my hands. *(looks up)* It WAS just yesterday!

LADI:

What happened?

DUSTMAN:

I could not keep the coins safely in my house. And I still needed to earn enough for my passage home.

LADI:

Yes?

DUSTMAN:

So I entrusted them to the (*sneers with disgust*) Cadi. He said my fortune would be safe with him. That very day I came across some friends from home. They said I could travel back with them! But when I returned to collect my coins – I could not believe it! – the Cadi pretended not to know me!

LADI:

Truly? The very same day?

DUSTMAN:

He threw me out of his home! Called ME a thief! (*arms in air in despair*) AUGHH! I am left with nothing! It will take me until the end of days. My children will be grown and their children grown, and I will miss it all!

LADI:

But were there no witnesses?

DUSTMAN:

(*moans*) Not ... a ... one. Besides, I am but a dustman. And he is (*blows his nose*) the CADI of Stamboul.

LADI:

(*pauses to think*) Come inside, dear Dustman. I may have an idea. But you must listen carefully and do exactly as I say. (*places arm around Dustman's shoulders*)

[LADI and DUSTMAN move to the very front of the stage, the area in front of Dustman's home, but far enough from it that it is clear the actors are not in the Dustman's home. They pantomime talking, then DUSTMAN exits. LADI'S SERVANT enters. LADI pantomimes talking to LADI'S SERVANT, and LADI'S SERVANT nods her head while listening.]

NARRATOR:

Hmm.. The good lady has something in mind. But what can it be? Can it prove the Turkish proverb that says, "A liar's candle will only last till evening"?

[NARRATOR exits.]

[CADI, SERVANT #1 and SERVANT #2 enter to CADI's home. Meanwhile, LADI and LADI'S SERVANT enter and move toward the audience., They bend their heads close together, whispering.]

LADI:

You remember what we went over, right, my servant?

LADI'S SERVANT:

I think so.

LADI:

You wait outside the Cadi's house (*points to Cadi's house*). Watch the front door carefully. You'll see me enter. A few minutes later the Dustman will enter. You **MUST WAIT** until the Dustman leaves. At that point you must run to the front door. When you see me, you'll say, "My lady! Your husband has returned from Egypt and awaits you at home!" Exactly like that. Got it?

LADI'S SERVANT:

Yes ma'am, I got it. (*to audience*) I do as I'm told. It doesn't have to make sense.

LADI:

Good. It is of the utmost importance you remember your part.

LADI'S SERVANT:

(*nods and walks toward Cadi's home, rehearsing the words with different emphasis*) (*clears throat*) "My LADY! Your husband has returned from Egypt and awaits you at home!" "My lady, your husband has returned from EGYPT and awaits you at HOME!" (*to audience*) I think I've got this.

[LADI straightens up, tidies her hair and robe, and checks the purse at her side. DUSTMAN enters, glances at LADI and nods. He walks to the CADI'S house and lingers outside. LADI walks confidently toward the CADI'S home. She pauses in front of the urns.]

Scene 7 - Cadi's Home

[Stage set: as in Scene 3.]

LADI:

(bows low) Greetings, good sir! Forgive my interruption.

CADI:

Greetings, my good lady. It's always a pleasure to see a high-born lady such as yourself. Do enter.

LADI:

Thank you kindly. *(enters and approaches the Cadi)* If I may tell you the purpose of my call.

CADI:

By all means. Not everyone does.

LADI:

I come to you because you are the sole person in all of Stamboul who can be trusted with a most delicate proposition.

CADI:

I am honored with your confidence.

LADI:

You see, my husband as you know is one of the most prominent merchants in Stamboul.

CADI:

(nods) Hmm..mmH!

LADI:

He has been away on business in Egypt a long time. I was so glad to hear the news today that I am to join him there in Egypt. But what worries me is how to safeguard my jewels till I return. With all the dangers at sea – pirates, mutinies - surely I cannot take my treasures with me.

CADI:

Surely not.

[She walks toward CADI and pours a mountain of jewels into his lap. He sits, stunned, staring at the treasure. He picks up one piece at a time, caresses each one and gazes at it lovingly.]

LADI:

(Ladi smiles and then quickly turns serious again) You see, good sir, there are few people one can truly trust.

[As CADI continues to admire the jewels, DUSTMAN enters. CADI does not notice him. LADI motions to DUSTMAN to urge him to speak.]

DUSTMAN:

(nervous) Your Excel...Cadi, I have returned to reclaim the 500 silver coins I left in your care.

[CADI continues to be absorbed by the jewels.]

CADI:

Uh... say, what?

DUSTMAN:

My 500 silver coins. Remember? I left them in your care yesterday? Thank you, but now I have come to reclaim them.

CADI:

(looks up and starts to bellow with rage) You HAVE now, have you? *(then looks at Ladi, realizes his predicament, and softens his tone)* I mean, why uh... yes, of course! *(glances at Ladi, then back to Dustman)* Your coins have been SAFE with me. Yes, every one of them. Servant! *(snaps his fingers repeatedly to Servant #1)* Retrieve this man's bag of coins from the black trunk.

[SERVANT #1 bows, ducks behind CADI'S chair, and returns with the DUSTMAN'S bag of coins. He hands it to DUSTMAN. DUSTMAN grasps the bag and backs down the aisle. LADI gives him a quick, private "thumbs up" sign and returns her attention to CADI. DUSTMAN exits.]

CADI:

(to Ladi) Now, my lady. As you can see, I am to be thoroughly trusted with all manner of valuables. Why even the common scrabble bring me their trinkets. Your magnificent jewels will be safe with me. Have no fear, yes indeedy...

[CADI is interrupted by LADI'S servant rushing in.]

LADI'S SERVANT:

(out of breath) A thousand pardons, good sir. *(to Ladi)* My lady! Your husband has returned from Egypt and awaits you at home!

LADI:

(claps her hands) What joyous news! *(scoops up jewels to put back in bag; Cadi hangs on tightly to some)* Oh thank you, good sir. *(struggles with him to get jewels back in bag)* Truly, a man like you is rare indeed! *(yanks last of jewels from his hands)*

[LADI runs offstage, with LADI'S SERVANT following close behind.]

[CADI stares, dumbfounded.]

CADI:

(to audience, holding both elbows outward at waist-level with the palms facing up) What. Just. Happened?

[CADI slowly looks at his lap and then back at the entrance. He looks again at his empty hands and back at the doorway. Finally it dawns on him what happened, and he pounds the arms of his chair with anger.]

NARRATOR:

Misfortune followed the Cadi for the rest of his days. But do we feel sorry for him? *(waits for three seconds for audience response)* I didn't think so. He was never again trusted to resolve a claim or mediate a dispute. He sold his fine home, moved to a faraway province of Turkey, and was never seen again. As the Turkish proverb says, "Fire burns where it falls."

[NARRATOR starts to exit, then turns around to face the audience again.]

NARRATOR:

Oh, and one more: "Beauty passes, wisdom remains." And so my friends, my tale is told, and we say goodbye.

[If you have a curtain, close it now. If you do not, fade the lights. If you have no stage lights, all actors come on stage and bow to the audience.]



Performance Notes for The Dustman and the Cadi

THREE WAYS THAT STUDENTS AND TEACHERS CAN UTILIZE THIS PLAY

1. Students can read the play aloud while sitting in the classroom. Ask the readers to skip all bracketed stage directions. You may prefer to rotate your actors to give all students a chance to read the speaking parts.
2. Students can perform the play in the classroom. Clear an area that can be used as the stage. Have the audience sit on the floor in front of the stage. Students in the play can make simple costumes and/or sets as described below. When the scene change, the characters "on stage" simply walk to the back of the room where they wait until their next appearance "on stage."
3. Students can perform the play on stage. Refer to the production notes that follow. Ask the actors to enter from the back of the room and move through the audience as they approach the stage.



COSTUMES

Note: Many of the characters wear turbans or headscarves. You can use long pieces of fabric and do a Google search for how to wrap a turban or headscarf.

- NARRATOR— Perhaps nice shirt and slacks and/or a nice skirt and blouse, or a nice dress.
- DUSTMAN— Baggy linen shirt, light brown or tan, and baggy linen pants, black or brown. Sandals. Clothes should look old and worn. You can use dirt and/or cut holes in the knees/elbows. A turban or worn brown hat.



- VILLAGERS— Long sleeved solid colored shirts and dark solid or patterned bottoms, pants or skirts. Waist sashes and pale colored headscarves/turbans or worn hats.
- CADI— Robe, solid shirt, waist sash, black pants, beard if possible, and a turban.
- EMIN and ZEKI— Dress much like villagers, but can wear different colors to set them apart. Long sleeved solid colored shirts and dark solid or patterned bottoms. Waist sashes and pale colored turbans or worn hats.
- SERVANTS— Bunchy pants, long linen shirt, and waist scarves.
- PEDDLERS— Patterned balloon pants, turbans/head scarves, vests, and short-sleeved shirts. Lots of bright colors.
- LADI— Bold colored patterned dress, shawl, and headscarf. She can also wear a necklace.
- LADI'S SERVANT— Bunchy pants, long linen shirt, and waist scarf. To set this servant apart from the others, have him/her wear a different colors than the other servants.



PROPS

Scene 1

- A small bag of coins for DUSTMAN to carry. You can use a bandana or piece of fabric, gathered and tied at the top. You can use real or fake coins.
- A pot with a lid for DUSTMAN to look in.
- Broom for DUSTMAN.

Scene 2

- Broom (same as Scene 1).
- Scarves for SCARF PEDDLER.



- Veggies for VEGGIE PEDDLER. These can be plastic or made from cardboard.
- Baskets for FEMALE VILLAGERS to carry.
- Optional: Fake money for FEMALE VILLAGERS to pretend to buy goods. Or they can just pantomime.²

Scene 3

- Coins (same as before).

Scene 4

- N/A

Scene 5

- Market goods, same as Scene 2.

Scene 6

- Broom (same as before).
- Handkerchief for LADI to give to DUSTMAN.
- Purse for LADI.

Scene 7

- A bag of jewels for LADI. The bag can be a small cloth sack or a handkerchief gathered and tied at the top. Jewels can be plastic jewels, beads, or anything shiny.
- Coins (same as before).



SETS

The stage is divided into three sections. If you wish to create a backdrop, you can paint it to show all three locations. The three locations are:

- 1) The Dustman's home, on one side of that stage.
- 2) The village market, in the middle of the stage.
- 3) The Cadi's house, on the other end of the stage.

Scene 1— Dustman's home. A small rug, a small table, and a chair are on stage. On the table is a large cooking pot with a lid. There is also a broom leaning against the table or the wall- any place where it won't fall down.

Scene 2— Village market. Two small tables are on stage, each with a white tablecloth. On top of the tablecloth, place the goods. One table can be covered in textiles, such as scarves and blankets, and the other with vegetables and fruit. Food items can be real, plastic, or made out of cardboard.

You can make signs for the good out of cardboard or poster board and tape them onto the front of the tables. See example below:

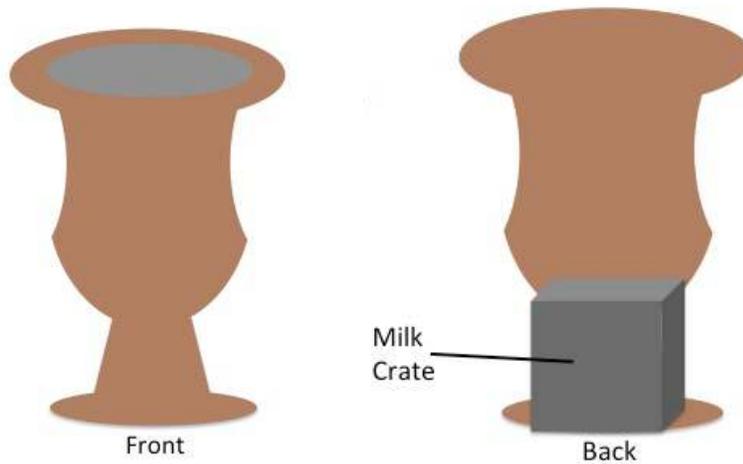




Scene 3- Cadi's home. There is a large decorated chair onstage. You can use a large wooden chair and cover it in nice fabric and place a pillow on the seat.

Two decorative urns mark the entrance to the home. You can use plastic urns, or make them out of cardboard and paint with designs. For cardboard urns, attach each one to a milk crate, so that they are free-standing. See below.

Optional: To decorate the Cadi's home more, you can add a rug runner.



Example Designs



Scene 4- Village Market, same as Scene 2.

Scene 5- Cadi's home, same as Scene 3.

Scene 6- Village Market, same as Scene 2 and 4.

Scene 7- Cadi's home, same as Scene 3 and 5.

