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Old Sultan

A Play for Children by

Christopher Miller

Based on the Folktale by The Brothers Grimm

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Old Sultan

by Christopher Miller

CHARACTERS:

OLD SULTAN-DOG; An aging guard dog

THREE-LEGGED CAT; Crotchety old cat, but sharp as a tack

LOU-WOLF; Crafty acquaintance of Old Sultan

THUMP-BOAR.; Wolf's associate—Not as smart as he is large

SIMONE-SHEEP #1; The diva of the barnyard

REGGIE-SHEEP #2; Part of Sheep #1's entourage

LIONEL-SHEEP #3; The other part of Sheep #1's entourage

DORIS-COW; Uncertain and a bit slow on the uptake

HEDGE-HEN; Nervous coward—Pacify rather than confront

FARMER DAN; Silhouette/Shadow*—Decides who's an asset on farm.

FARMER MARY; Silhouette/Shadow*—Wife of Farmer Dan.

TIME:

18th Century (with anachronisms) or Present.

PLACE:

A Barnyard.

**Technical Note: The action that takes place inside the house may work as the shadow silhouettes of live actors or as shadow puppetry voiced by existing actors playing the other animals.*

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SCENE 1

(LIGHTS UP on a BARNYARD. A FARMHOUSE on one side. A great commotion as SHEEP #1 [S#1], SHEEP#2 [S#2] & SHEEP#3 [S#3], COW, and HEN whirl across the stage in a cacophony of barnyard business.

SHEEP are obviously the precious lot of the yard and S#1 is the most precious of them. S#2 & S#3 force the other animals out of the way when S#1 grazes in a new location.

The only animal on stage that doesn't move with specific business is THREE-LEGGED CAT [3-LC]. She sits perfectly still, on the porch, wearing a straw hat, looking like a scarecrow. One shouldn't notice her until she moves.

As S#1 crosses on the new path that S#2 and S#3 have just cleared, S#1 lets out a bloodcurdling SCREAM!

All other business stops, then everyone rushes to see.)

SHEEP #2

Oh, my goodness. What happened?

SHEEP #3

Give her room people. If you're not helping, you're hurting. Give her some room.

SHEEP #1

Somebody call the vet. I've been...attacked.

SHEEP #2

Attacked? /Call the vet. /Tell the farmer to call the vet. /Can't you see she's been attacked? /We need medical attention.

SHEEP #3 (OVERLAPPING)

Did you see what happened / you animals? / If you're not helping you're hurting. / Give her some room.

COW

I saw some tracks here earlier. I'm sure I saw some tracks. And...and...I think I saw something running by—

SHEEP #2

(in tears)

You think?!!!

HEN

It all happened so quickly. I had just left the chicks. And I was saying to myself, "Self-"

SHEEP #3

Can't you think about someone other than yourself? Think about her. Where's the guard dog? Where's Old Sultan?

(to S#1)

You'll pull through. I promise. Where did they get you?

SHEEP #1

In...the...hoof.

SHEEP #2

The hoof? The hoof? That's not so bad. Many sheep have pulled through this exact thing. And you're the best sheep around. You're going to make it. You're going to make it.

(aside to S#3)

She'll never make it. The hoof? She's a goner.

SHEEP #3

Won't somebody please call a vet!

(As the crying commotion hits fever pitch, 3-LC erupts in an incredible display of hacking up a fur ball. All commotion freezes as ALL look to her. Once it finally passes, 3-LC calmly addresses them as if nothing happened.)

THREE-LEGGED CAT

If it were me, and nobody's asked me, I'd lift her hoof and see what she stepped on.

(Confused, S#2 and S#3 try lifting her hoof, but she can't stand on one hoof.)

THREE-LEGGED CAT (CONT'D)

Oh, for goodness sake!

(3-LC approaches and pushes S#2 down on the ground to act as a bench, shoves S#1 down on S#2, then uses S#3 as a stoop to prop up S#1's hoof.)

COW and HEN investigate the hoof.)

COW

I don't see anything.

HEN

Wait! I see something.

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Well, pull it out.

(Reluctantly, HEN sticks her beak in and pulls out a...TOOTH. She drops it into COW's hand.)

COW

It's a... a... a... tooth. I didn't know chickens had teeth.

HEN

We don't. It's not mine. I promise.

SHEEP #2

Then whose tooth is it?

SHEEP #3

Who?

SHEEP #1

Who would be so careless? Leaving a tooth lying around like that for me to step on.

(A HOWL from offstage. All turn to see... OLD SULTAN ENTERING, holding an apple in one hand, his mouth with the other.)

OLD SULTAN

Merrrcyyy. This season's apples are harder than ever. Oww. Who would be fool enough to eat one of these?

(takes another bite)

Oowww. That's smarts, I tell you what. Smarts. Hey, what's everybody standing around for? I'm okay. No need to worry about me. I was just eating one of this season's apples here and...oowwee. Smarts. I tell you what. But you don't need to concern yourselves. I'm fine. I appreciate the concern though.

(puts on glasses to see their expressions)

...What?

SHEEP #1

You're supposed to protect us, you mangy flea-bag.

SHEEP #2

You nearly killed Simone, you worthless old hound.

SHEEP #3

She almost lost her hoof, you toothless mongrel.

OLD SULTAN

Hey, hey, hey. I still have a tooth left.

(Notices tooth COW holds, takes it, shoves it in his mouth.)

Now I have two.

(OLD SULTAN does a smiling dance. The tooth falls out.)

HEN

I think what they're trying to say, and correct me if I'm wrong here, is that you're a guard dog. And you do a great job, don't get me wrong. Fantastic job. Right, Doris?

COW

Yeah...yeah... ..yeah.

HEN

It's just that, help me out here, if you don't mind.

SHEEP #1

You're old.

SHEEP #2

Blind.

SHEEP #3

Crusty.

SHEEP #1

You're toothless.

SHEEP #2

No bite.

SHEEP #3

All gums.

SHEEP #1

And a thief would only laugh to look at you.

SHEEP #2

Fall to the ground.

SHEEP #3

On the ground with your teeth.

SHEEP #1

You're not up to the job anymore.

(S#2 and S#3 shake heads. A beat.)

HEN

...No offense.

SHEEP #1

Doris saw some tracks right here earlier. You're sliding, old dog. You don't pay your way around here anymore. You don't lay eggs, you don't give milk, and you don't grow wool. You're just... You're just too old.

HEN

...No offense.

OLD SULTAN

Come on, guys. Has anything ever gotten to you while I've been on the job?

(to HEN)

Remember a few years back, that fox trying to get into the henhouse? Who took care of that? Huh?

(to COW)

Or the bear in the pasture? Remember the bear in the pasture? Who scared him off with his growl and his snarl and the patented bristly tail in the air? I've been taking care of this place since before you were all born. Give a little respect to Old Sultan.

(The other animals seem to consider this.)

I think we all do our share around here. Right? We all contribute... Most of us anyway.

(Nods toward 3-LC.)

Now, I'm never one to judge or nothing, you know that about me. But seems to me... I don't recall ever seeing a mouse around these parts. When was the last time anyone saw a mouse around here? And I've been here a long time. I'm not saying useless, but about the only contribution I ever see from some of us, is hacking up a big fur ball.

(ALL "Eeww")

But, I'm just talking.

HEN

You make a good point, Old Sultan.

OLD SULTAN

I mean, seriously.

(OLD SULTAN does an exaggerated hacking up of a fur ball in imitation of 3-LC. ALL the other animals laugh. They ALL participate in the imitation doing impressions for one another, laughing.)

OLD SULTAN, proud of his reversal, smiles his single tooth grin, and bites into the apple. He lets out a PAINED HOWL.

His last tooth falls to the ground with a plink.

The other animals see this and stop laughing. COW, HEN, S#1 and S#2

SLINK OFF-STAGE. S#3 "tsk tsk" OLD SULTAN until realizing that the other have gone. S#3 follows after the other sheep.

OLD SULTAN stands alone, apart from 3-LC, who only shakes her head.

OLD SULTAN, defeated, crosses to 3-LC)

OLD SULTAN (CONT'D)

The young ones just can't appreciate us old-timers, huh? Some reason they think just cause we're old we're-

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Useless?

(3-LC puts on her hat and walks away. As she reaches the edge she hacks up a small fur ball. Belch.

OLD SULTAN sighs and circles a patch of ground, burrows into it, and curls into a ball. He howls as NIGHT FALLS.)

(A LIGHT appears from the farmhouse as FARMER DAN and his wife, FARMER MARY, discuss from inside. Only their silhouettes are visible from the lantern light. FARMER MARY rocks a baby in a BASSINET. OLD SULTAN listens and reacts to their conversation.)

FARMER DAN

I saw some wolf tracks near the sheep pen.

FARMER MARY

Oh dear.

FARMER DAN

We just can't have that.

FARMER MARY

I'm sure Old Sultan will scare that wolf away.

FARMER DAN

I don't know. He's getting very old and we certainly can't have a wolf-

FARMER MARY

Old Sultan will take care of it.

FARMER DAN

...I don't know. He's getting too old. Think of the baby. If a wolf got in here...

FARMER MARY

Old Sultan wouldn't let that happen. He's been a loyal dog all these years-

FARMER DAN

And he's been fed for it. I don't know. ...Tomorrow, after I tend to the hay, I'm going to have to shoot Old Sultan.

(FARMER DAN extinguishes the lantern. Upon hearing this, OLD SULTAN lets out a mournful howl, followed by a pained whimper.)

OLD SULTAN

All those years of service. All the loyalty I've given. Everything I've done. That's just not right. What do I do now? This is all I've ever known. Since I was a little pup. Where do I go?

(resolutely)

Well, that's it then. No more guard dogging for me, if that's the thanks I get. You can just forget it. No more guard dogg—

(Instinctually, OLD SULTAN sniffs something in the air and GROWLS toward a BUSH. RUSTLING from bush.)

OLD SULTAN (CONT'D)

Who's there? If you're smart, you won't make me come in there after you. I'll give you 'til three. One...

(WOLF pokes his head from out of the bush, all smiles, non-threatening shrugs.)

WOLF

No need to count any further. It's me. Your cousin. Your old pal, Louie Pine, the wolf, is here to help you out.

(OLD SULTAN leaps into the bush to tangle with WOLF.)

WOLF (CONT'D)

What happened to two and three!!!?

(A great commotion inside the bush as WOLF's legs and snout and tail make their way out only to be pulled back in. WOLF manages to almost pull himself out when OLD SULTAN drags him back in.)

Eventually, OLD SULTAN drags WOLF out by the scruff of the neck.)

WOLF (CONT'D)

What was that for? I told you I was here to help.

OLD SULTAN

Here to help yourself to one of the sheep, no doubt.

WOLF

No, I'm here to help you, cousin.

OLD SULTAN

And how are you going to help me?

WOLF

I'm going to save your life.

(OLD SULTAN stops and considers. He drops WOLF with a thud.)

OLD SULTAN

You've got one minute.

WOLF

For an old dog, you still pack quite a wallop.

OLD SULTAN

Tick-tock.

WOLF

Humans, they're fickle. They change their minds like the wind changes direction. This minute they love you, this minute they don't. Now, the good thing about fickle humans is that they'll be just as fickle and take you back and shower you with gifts when the wind changes.

OLD SULTAN

And why would they do that?

WOLF

Because you saved the baby.

OLD SULTAN

Oh, right... Wait. When did I save the baby?

WOLF

When I took it.

OLD SULTAN

Oh, right... Wait. You took the baby?

WOLF

Not yet. But tomorrow morning, I will.

(OLD SULTAN considers "Oh, right... Wait", then grabs WOLF by the scruff of the neck and winds up for a punch.)

WOLF (CONT'D)

But I won't get far with it, because you're going to chase me down and save the baby. Then they'll shower you with gifts, just like you were a pup again.

OLD SULTAN

I really don't like this one bit.

WOLF

Oh sure. And I'm sure the farmer will change his mind and let you stay here if you don't do anything... Isn't that right?

(OLD SULTAN releases WOLF.)

WOLF (CONT'D)

All right, cousin. Here's how it'll work...

(LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK as the two conspire.)

(LIGHTS UP on the BARNYARD. Early Morning.

A great commotion as the animals whirl across the stage in a cacophony of barnyard business, everyone with a specific task.

The SILHOUETTE of the bassinet sits in a window of the farmhouse as FARMER MARY goes about her chores inside.

OLD SULTAN patrols the yard, but looks the other way as...

WOLF arrives, dressed in Sheep's clothing. He makes clumsy sheep movements and noises, which cause some suspicion in the other sheep, but they go about their business. WOLF gets right up to S#1 and can't help licking his chops.

OLD SULTAN growls at WOLF, keeping him to task.)

WOLF (CONT'D)

(whispering to OLD SULTAN)

Sorry. It's in my nature. That's just who I am.

(WOLF gets back to business, moseying up to the window, but gets distracted as HEN passes by.

WOLF'S attention goes from HEN to OLD SULTAN to THE BABY until

he gets so distracted that he ends up face first in COW'S backside.)

COW

Moowee.

WOLF

Sorry-I mean...Baaah.

(WOLF eventually makes it to the farm house where he slips inside. Moments later his SILHOUETTE stands over the bassinet, his shadow looming and ominous. FARMER MARY screams and faints.

ALL the animals react to this as OLD SULTAN jumps into action, giving chase through the house. THE SILHOUETTES of OLD SULTAN chasing WOLF. SOUND of furniture tossed, pots and pans clanging, etc...

WOLF darts from the house and runs across the barnyard, the bassinet in his mouth. OLD SULTAN right behind, chases WOLF into the audience, eventually disappearing.

OFF STAGE NOISE of great commotion as the other animals watch from a distance... then Silence...)

HEN

They've disappeared into the woods. I can't see them.

COW

Do you think Old Sultan can save the child?

HEN

I'm sure he can. Right?

SHEEP #1

That flea-bag?

SHEEP #2

Maybe ten years ago.

SHEEP #3

Before he got so old.

HEN

I guess you're right.

COW

The poor child. Old Sultan is too feeble to save him.

(The animals ad lib the possibility that such an old dog could save the child.)

OLD SULTAN returns from upstage, bouncing at his accomplishment, the bassinet in his mouth. The other animals are unaware.

OLD SULTAN enters the house, his shadow/silhouette through the window. FARMER MARY rushes to take the bassinet, petting OLD SULTAN.)

FARMER MARY

Oh, you wonderful dog. You're such a good boy.

(The other animals watch through the window as FARMER DAN arrives inside the house.)

FARMER DAN

What's going on? Is the baby all right?

FARMER MARY

He is now. Old Sultan saved him from the wolf.

FARMER DAN

He did? Well, there's a good boy. Yes you are. A very good boy.

FARMER MARY

And you will always be a member of this family. Don't you worry about that. Right, husband?

FARMER DAN

Absolutely. Have a steak.

(FARMER DAN hands OLD SULTAN a steak, which he brings outside into the yard as he struts in circles.)

The other animals, aside from 3-LC, lavish OLD SULTAN with praise, make him comfortable, fan him, etc...)

SHEEP #1

Knew you could do it.

SHEEP #2

Spry as a pup.

SHEEP #3

So brave.

I thought you said—

COW

I knew you could. The whole time.

HEN

But you said-

COW

The whole time.

HEN

Well, thanks for the vote of confidence.

OLD SULTAN

(Only 3-LC remains on the sidelines. OLD SULTAN nods in her direction.)

Some of us have jobs to do. Some of us can't stand around like statues. Some of us work for a living.

OLD SULTAN *(CONT'D)*

You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to make you a down pillow so you don't have to sit on the hard ground.

HEN

Thank you, Hedge.

OLD SULTAN

(HEN runs off.)

And I'm going to fix you up a nice cup of milk, so you don't get thirsty.

COW

And thank you, Doris.

OLD SULTAN

(winks)

(COW saunters off.)

And we're going to make you a nice wool blanket, so you can stay warm at night.

SHEEP #1

Lionel, Reggie... Simone, a thousand thanks to you all.

OLD SULTAN

(OLD SULTAN gives S#1 a pinch of the cheek, which makes her giggle. S#1 and S#2 EXIT, as S#3 absentminded watches OLD SULTAN. Realizing that the others have gone, S#3 follows after them.)

OLD SULTAN rolls around on the ground and chews his steak, pleased with himself. He addresses the audience.)

OLD SULTAN (CONT'D)

It's good to be the ruler of the barnyard once again. Did you know that the word Sultan means ruler? ...Yup. *(elaborately stretches out.)* Ah...I'm the king. It's good to be the king.

(OLD SULTAN suns himself for a moment when instinctually, he sniffs something in the air and GROWLS toward the bush. WOLF pops his head from the bush, beaten and disheveled.)

WOLF

You didn't need to be so rough with me back there, you know.

OLD SULTAN

Sorry. It's in my nature. That's just who I am.

(shadow boxes)

You know, it felt pretty good, mixing it up like that.

WOLF

Like old times, huh?

OLD SULTAN

You bet.

(The two laugh as they play fight.)

WOLF

Made you feel pretty good, huh?

OLD SULTAN

Don't you know it, cousin. Like I'm on top of the world.

WOLF

You know, anything I can do to help.

OLD SULTAN

Sure, sure. And the same to you.

WOLF

Really?

Of course. OLD SULTAN

No I couldn't accept. WOLF

No, no. Anything I can do. OLD SULTAN

Well... No I couldn't. WOLF

Anything— OLD SULTAN

I'll take a sheep. WOLF

(A beat)

...You what now? OLD SULTAN

You know. As... uh... payment for services rendered. I scratch your tail, you scratch mine. WOLF

Now, let's be reasonable. Just what sort of guard dog would I be if I let you take one of the sheep? OLD SULTAN

The grateful kind. You owe me, don't forget. WOLF

Yeah, but... OLD SULTAN

I did you a favor. You said, "Anything I can do" to return the favor. Are you telling me no? WOLF

(a beat)

Now, I'll just go and help myself, the pretty little one maybe-

(As WOLF saunters toward the direction of the sheep, OLD SULTAN picks him up by the scruff of the neck.)

What are you doing? That's not fair. You'll regret this decision, Old Sultan! WOLF (CONT'D)

(OLD SULTAN tosses WOLF offstage and slaps his hands clean.)

OLD SULTAN

Well, that's taken care of and will most certainly be the end of that and I'll definitely regret no decision that I've made here today. Right?

(Without warning, 3-LC lets out a tremendous fur ball hack, catching OLD SULTAN off-guard, unaware that she'd been there the whole time.)

THREE-LEGGED CAT

(casually, after passing fur ball)

Oh, sure. You make a deal with the Big, Bad Wolf and then you refuse to pay him. Yes, I'm sure your dilemma will be resolved that easily. Isn't that always the case?

OLD SULTAN

...Yup.

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Yeah, right.

(OLD SULTAN kicks back in a leisurely pose.)

OLD SULTAN

How could this possibly come back to get me?

(ENTER BOAR, a large, intimidating looking fellow, followed by WOLF who stays closely behind him.)

BOAR approaches OLD SULTAN who looks up, "Yeep". OLD SULTAN flinches a bit as BOAR pulls out... A large scroll.

BOAR clears his throat as he reads from the scroll. WOLF occasionally whispers corrections into BOAR's ear.)

BOAR

As an associate of Wolf.

(WOLF whispers in his ear)

Er, uh, Mr. Louis Pine Wolf III, I Thump, the Boar, have agreed to read the following prepared statement.

(reading, stumbling as he does)

"Your refusal to fulfill your obligation to... sheep... payment..."

(scrolls ahead)

Ah! "is hereby seen as a declaration of war. I challenge you to a duel." I being Wolf, not me. "Meet here tomorrow and, following the traditional ways, bring a second."

OLD SULTAN

A second? What's a second?

(BOAR confidently motions to answer, but then looks to WOLF for clarification.)

BOAR

What's a second?

WOLF

(to BOAR)

Someone to fight next to him.

BOAR

(to OLD SULTAN)

Someone to fight next to you.

(WOLF whispers into BOAR's ear.)

I, Thump, the Boar, will be performing the role of second to Wolf-

(WOLF whispers into BOAR's ear.)

Mr. Louis Pine Wolf III. In short, Wolf will bring his friend, me, as a second, and you must bring a friend to stand up next to you.

(WOLF whispers into BOAR's ear.)

Now slap him.

(After a moment, BOAR slaps OLD SULTAN.)

(BOAR spins his attention between WOLF and OLD SULTAN.)

WOLF

Tell him, if we win, we get to eat all the farm animals.

BOAR

If we win, we get to eat all the farm animals.

OLD SULTAN

All the farm animals?

BOAR

All the farm animals?

WOLF

All the farm animals.

BOAR

All the farm animals.

WOLF

Unless he wants to surrender. Then we'll just take a sheep.

BOAR

Unless you want to surrender. Then we'll just take a sheep.

OLD SULTAN

I know, I heard him.

BOAR

He knows, he heard you.

WOLF

I know, I heard him.

BOAR

He knows, he heard you.

(BOAR continues spinning his attention between WOLF and OLD SULTAN even after they stop speaking.)

(After a moment it appears there's nothing left to say and WOLF and BOAR EXIT.)

OLD SULTAN

Oh, boy. That did not work out nearly as easily as I imagined it would. Now I need to find a second to stand up next to me in a fight. Hmm. Well, all the other animals love me now. This should be pretty easy.

(After a moment, ALL the other animals return to shower Old Sultan with gifts.)

HEN

Here's that pillow for you to rest on, Old Sultan. Take a load off your feet.

OLD SULTAN

Thanks, Hedge, but I'm not really tir—

(HEN knocks him down on the PILLOW.)

COW

And here's a nice tall pitcher of cold milk. Cool down while you take a load off.

OLD SULTAN

I'm not all that thirsty right now-

(COW forces the milk from the PITCHER down OLD SULTAN's throat.)

SHEEP #1

And when you get too cold from that milk, this blanket will keep you warm.

OLD SULTAN

It's still a little warm out—

*(The SHEEP smother him with the BLANKET like a straight jacket.
OLD SULTAN eventually breaks free.)*

OLD SULTAN (CONT'D)

Thank you all for these kind gifts. It really means a lot to me.

HEN

No, thank you.

COW

You're the one who keeps us safe.

SHEEP #2

Oh, Old Sultan.

SHEEP #3

We'd do anything for you.

OLD SULTAN

Anything?

SHEEP #1

Anything.

OLD SULTAN

Well...as it happens, I do need a teensy-weensy favor from one of you.

SHEEP #1

Just name it.

OLD SULTAN

You see, the Wolf.

HEN

Whom you bested in physical conflict.

OLD SULTAN

...Yeah...

SHEEP #1

Who will probably never set foot in this barnyard again after the thrashing you gave him.

SHEEP #2

So brave.

So strong. SHEEP #3

...Yeah, about that... OLD SULTAN

YYeeees? SHEEP #1
(fluttering her eyes)

You see, he's challenged me to a duel. OLD SULTAN

Oh, well that shouldn't be a problem for you. COW

You see, he has this friend- OLD SULTAN

You have friends, too. HEN

Absolutely/ Oh yeah/ We're definitely your friends/ You bet/ We're with you/ You're just great! ALL ANIMALS *(OVERLAPPING)*

Well, you see, Wolf's friend, the Boar... OLD SULTAN

(ALL the animals suddenly stop their showering of praise.)

Boar is going to fight alongside Wolf and I need a friend to stand next to me... for a fight... against Wolf and Boar... So whoever wants to stand up next to Old Sultan...just stand up next to Old Sultan. OLD SULTAN *(CONT'D)*

No, no, no, stand next to Old Sultan... Me. *(ALL the animals step away from OLD SULTAN.)*

I think I hear my chicks calling. Coming!!! HEN

(HEN runs OFFSTAGE.)

You know I'd love to help, but the vet said I needed to keep off my feet as much as possible. Good luck. COW

(COW saunters OFFSTAGE.

OLD SULTAN approaches the SHEEP. He smiles at them, offering them a chance.)

SHEEP #1

Yeah, we just don't really want to.

(S#1 EXITS)

SHEEP #2

Um, no.

(S#2 EXITS.

OLD SULTAN approaches S#3 who stands, nervously smiling for a moment, but then chases after the other sheep)

SHEEP #3 (*OFFSTAGE*)

Not so much.

OLD SULTAN

They're all just like Farmer Dan. They're my best-friends when things are going well, but the second things go south...

(blows tongue, thumbs down.)

That's not right. Right?

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Do you deserve better?

(OLD SULTAN is caught off-guard by 3-LC who appears to have been standing there all along.)

OLD SULTAN

How long have you been there?

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Long enough.

OLD SULTAN

Oh. So you saw...?

THREE-LEGGED CAT

All the trouble you've gotten yourself into. Tsk, tsk, tsk.

OLD SULTAN

Oh. Well I

(With each reprimand for his behavior, OLD SULTAN's head hangs lower and lower.)

THREE-LEGGED CAT

You should be ashamed. Dealing with the wolf. Lying to the farmer. Lying to your friends. What happened to the noble, honest, courageous dog I used to know?

OLD SULTAN

He got too old, I guess.

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Too old? That's your excuse. I'm just as old as you.

(3-LC whips OLD SULTAN's behind with her wooden leg. OLD SULTAN jumps.)

OLD SULTAN

Hey. That hurts.

THREE-LEGGED CAT

(attacking again, mocking him)

Hurts your old bones does it?

OLD SULTAN

Knock it off.

(3-LC and OLD SULTAN square off as the cat taunts the dog. OLD SULTAN getting riled up from the taunting.)

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Why? You're too old and feeble to protect yourself?

OLD SULTAN

I can still protect myself.

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Just like you're too old and feeble to protect the farm?

OLD SULTAN

I can still protect this farm.

THREE-LEGGED CAT

I don't believe you.

OLD SULTAN

I can still protect this farm!

THREE-LEGGED CAT

But you're sitting here crying.

OLD SULTAN

I can still protect the farm from the wolf.

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Then prove it!

OLD SULTAN

I will! It's just I can't protect it from both the Wolf and the Boar, and they're both going to be here soon, and I'm stuck fighting with you, and I can't find a friend who'll offer me a hand.

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Then we'd better get ready, hadn't we?

(They stop sparring.)

OLD SULTAN

We? Why would you do this?

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Because a true friend will lend you a hand when you're in need. Because you need a hand.

(A beat... OLD SULTAN finally understands. The two nod their heads to one-another in agreement.)

OLD SULTAN

Now, I can still take Wolf, but how do we stop Boar. Have you seen that guy? He's huge!

THREE-LEGGED CAT

We don't have to best them physically.

OLD SULTAN

Then how do we "best" them?

THREE-LEGGED CAT

We best them mentally. The fight is always won in the mind. We just need them to surrender.

OLD SULTAN

And how do we do that?

(3-LC looks to OLD SULTAN with a knowing smile. OLD SULTAN looks to her with great anticipation. And then...)

THREE-LEGGED CAT

I don't know.

(Their faces drop as they consider. 3-LC suddenly raises her pole-leg up, swatting OLD SULTAN.)

OLD SULTAN

Ow.

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Wait! ...No.

(Their faces drop as they consider. 3-LC suddenly raises her pole-leg up, swatting OLD SULTAN.)

OLD SULTAN

Ow.

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Wait! ...No.

OLD SULTAN

That thing hurts, you know.

(Their faces drop as they consider. 3-LC suddenly raises her pole-leg up, but OLD SULTAN stops her.)

OLD SULTAN (CONT'D)

Wait! I've got it! I've got a plan.

(LIGHTS FADE as the two conspire.)

LIGHTS UP as WOLF and BOAR ENTER from the audience. They stop as WOLF pumps up BOAR like a boxer before a fight.)

BOAR

You think they're planning something?

WOLF

What planning? They're farm animals. They're about as smart as a sack of wet hair.

BOAR

Heh heh... Wet hair.

WOLF

They get soft and spoiled on the farm. They don't have to live by their wits, like you and me.

BOAR

Heh heh... Wits. Heh heh. They're dumb.

WOLF
You ain't gettin' soft on me, are you?

BOAR
Uh-uh.

WOLF
I don't want you getting soft on me.

BOAR
No way. No how. Not me.

WOLF
That's good. We're gonna show them farm animals what's what! You pumped!?

BOAR
I'm pumped!

WOLF
That Old Sultan's still tough for an old dog. Can you take him?!

BOAR
I can take him!

WOLF
Are you ready!?

BOAR
I'm ready! ...Let's rumble.

WOLF
All right.

(They rush the stage only to find it empty. CRICKETS.)

BOAR
Where'd they all go?

WOLF
They must be hiding. No need to worry. I'll sniff them out.

BOAR
(sotto)
I wasn't worried. I was just asking.

WOLF
Greetings, Old Sultan.

(OLD SULTAN appears from the side of the farmhouse.)

OLD SULTAN

Lou... Thump...

BOAR

...Hey.

WOLF

I'll offer you one more chance to surrender. I'll of course insist on a sheep as compensation.

OLD SULTAN

I've told you, I'm a guard dog and I won't let you touch one of these sheep or anyone on this farm.

WOLF

But it looks like you've failed to find a second to fight alongside you.

OLD SULTAN

No, I've found my second.

(3-LC appears from the roof of the farmhouse, waving her wooden-pole leg, the sound SWISHING like a sword.)

OLD SULTAN *(CONTD)*

And I offer you the chance to surrender.

WOLF

(scoffs)

Really? A three-legged cat is the best you could do, huh? ...I say it again, I offer you the chance to surrender.

THREE-LEGGED CAT

Never.

(3-LC waves her pole leg, but loses her balance. She drops from the roof, disappearing behind the house with a prolonged CRASH. Each time WOLF begins to speak, the CRASH continues.)

WOLF

I'll say it – *(waits for CRASH to stop)*– again. I'll give you – *(waits for CRASH to stop)* – a chance to – *(waits for CRASH to finally stop)* – surrender.

OLD SULTAN

Never.

WOLF

Then we fight.

OLD SULTAN

...Bring it.

(WOLF poses bravely, then jumps behind BOAR, pushing him toward OLD SULTAN.)

BOAR does a little air boxing, posing then rushes OLD SULTAN, but a POLE LEG emerges from a bush, poking BOAR in the behind.)

BOAR

Hey!

(He shakes the bush)

Come out here and fight me like a...

(To WOLF)

What is this thing?

WOLF

It's a cat, dummy.

BOAR

Like a cat dummy.

(As BOAR bends over into the bush, the pole leg emerges from another bush, swatting him in the behind.)

As BOAR reaches into the second bush, 3-LC appears from the side of the house.)

BOAR (CONT'D)

Hey. She's quick.

WOLF

Let me at her.

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes