

NIGHTS

a two-act musical

by Matt Fox and Jessie Thomson

<http://offthewallplays.com>

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Act 1

Scene 1 – Ria & Dee's home

Ria and Dee enter the stage. They approach the audience and begin to tell them a story...

Song – The Story so Far

*Ria: I have heard Oh fortunate Queen...
Once upon a time,
Many moons ago,*

Dee: Not that long ago

Ria: In a far off land...

Dee: In this very land...

*Ria: In this very land.
There were 2 fine kings.*

Dee: 2 Vikings?

Ria: 2-fine- kings.

Dee: More like despots.

Ria: SHHH. Shall I continue with my story?

Ria and Dee: There were 2 fine Kings.

*Ria: But the mighty kings
Soon were compromised
King Zaman
Returned one night
And caught his wife
And caught his wife
In the arms of a servant!*

Dee: I'm sure Zaman reacted reasonably and they talked through their differences.

*Ria: King Zaman was mad
He put his wife to death
Went to see his brother
He was very sad
But he found his brother's wife*

Having an orgy

Ria and Dee: Having an orgy!

Ria: Having an orgy all afternoon.

Ria: That made him feel better.

Dee: I bet it did.

*Ria: So the brothers troubled with their lives.
Went into the desert to forget about their wives
They found a genie asleep under a tree.
He had a slave girl...*

Ria and Dee: A slave girl.

Part 2

Dee.

For she was radiant.

She shone in the darkness and the day appeared.

For she was beautiful

She gleamed in the blackness and dispelled all he feared

*She was the warmth of the sun and the scent of the rain
She was the breath of the sky and the earth's lush terrain
She was heat in his heart and cool in his mind
She was everything and nothing, all the brash and refined.*

For she was magical

She rose in the morning and she powered the light

For she was intoxicating

She smothered the senses and impeded all might

*She was earthly and calm, with a delicate air
Delicious and sweet with a paralysing stare
She was all of things that his life seemed to lack
A void in his soul that was pitted and black.*

Ria plays the slave girl. Dee continues as narrator.

Part 3

Ria: Come here oh mighty kings

Dee: But they would not be tempted

Ria: Come here oh excellent rulers

Dee: Still they would not be moved.

Ria: Come to me now and take me as hard as you can, or I shall wake my husband.

Dee (spoken): WHAT?!

Ria (Spoken): Dee it's the story!

(sung) and because they were afraid, they took turns with her.

Dee (spoken): Ria, this is blatant propaganda!

Ria (Spoken): It's the story!

(sung) Now you must give your rings to me.

Dee laughs

Ria (spoken): What?

Dee (Spoken): She made them treat her like a whore... those poor abused men!

Ria (Spoken): Dee tell the story!

Dee (Sung): She added their rings to her collection of over 500 rings and the kings thought...

Ria (spoken): He might be a scheming genie but at least our wives aren't that bad!

Part 4

*Ria: And this all happened years ago, in this very land
This all happened years ago on the spot on which we stand.
It was harrowing enough to cause the King to lose his mind
To hate each woman in his land, a bloody axe for him to grind*

*He summoned our dear father, asking him to find a girl
The king could take to bed each night, a hidden, shining pearl
And once he'd satisfied his lust, and the night was set to fade
He took a final, frozen look and killed her where she laid.*

*And so each night the King does take a maiden from the street
He gives her wine and food to eat, and servants bathe her feet
He holds her in his arms and he whispers in her ear*

*It's time you were made still sweet slave girl
There's nothing here to fear.*

Jump into the here and now. Ria sits and Dee stands clearly appalled with the situation...

Dee – Wait a minute. That King was our King?

Ria – One and the same – the great Zaman.

Dee – And he killed his wife for shagging a servant, then had an orgy with his brother’s wife, and finally got forced into group sex with the slave girl of a genie, who stole his ring?

Ria – Don’t make it sound more sordid than it actually is.

Dee – But that is what is supposed to have happened to the actual king who rules this land? The one who’s now slaughtering women on a nightly basis?

Ria - It was all in the story Dee.

Dee – Doesn’t that seem a little far fetched to you?

Ria – Not really. There are plenty of other stories which people swear to be true; which are a lot more far fetched in my opinion.

Dee – I guess so...so we’re stuck here with a King who’s killing 30 girls a month

Ria – Sometimes 31.

Dee – But only 28 in February.

Ria – It was a leap year.

Dee – 29 then.

Ria – I’m not sure the population will take it much longer.

Dee – I’m not sure I can take it at all. Whatever the dubious nature of his back story. The King’s actually murdering girls, and they are actually dying.

Ria – And I think the rate we’re going, it won’t be too long until he comes our way.

Dee – And he always sleeps with them before murdering them?

Ria nods.

Ria - At least I won’t die a virgin....that’s positive I suppose?

Dee – I think you might need to take this a little more seriously Ria.

Ria – Actually I think we need to make merry whilst we can.

Dee – I suppose you’re right.

Song – The Party

Dee

*We must not dwell on this situation any longer
Let’s make light and drink to the moon.*

Ria
A party?

Dee
A party indeed.

Ria
What an idea, an excellent plan!

Dee
Let's get the girls together again, lets all raise a finger to the King.

Ria
Let's show that we won't live in fear of his vengeance

Dee
Let's show we won't cower at his sting.

Both
We shall hold the grandest ball that this Kingdom has ever seen.
We shall raise our hearts with wine and watch the day begin
We shall sing in voices raised to bring the dead to life
We shall not give up our spirit, not lay down to strife.

Ria
But who to invite Dee?

Dee
Let me see? What about B?

Ria
B was taken 3 months ago.

Dee
What about Jas?

Ria
Two months ago.

Dee
Oh dear. And how about our cousins

Ria
We have twelve.

Dee
Well there you are.

Ria
Sorry...we had twelve.

Dee
All dead.

Ria
Twelve nights in a row.

Dee
Well let's not fret.

Both
We shall hold the grandest ball that this Kingdom has ever seen.
We shall raise our hearts with wine and watch the day begin
We shall sing in voices raised to bring the dead to life
We shall not give up our spirit, not lay down to strife.

Ria
So there's me and you.

Dee
Indeed there is.

Ria
Not exactly a party.

Dee
No

Ria
Not exactly a family; or friends

Dee
Or even an acquaintance.

Ria
All gone and dead.

Dee
Still...
We shall hold the grandest ball that this Kingdom has ever seen.
We shall raise our hearts with wine and watch the day begin
We shall sing in voices raised to bring the dead to life
We shall not give up our spirit, not lay down to strife.

Ria
No. We need a plan. This can't go on.

Dee
What sort of plan?

Ria – Give me a minute...

Ria thinks...scratches her head and thinks again...she paces then thinks, has a momentary idea...thinks again. (Incidental music)

Dee looks on and waits.

Suddenly Ria has a plan...

Ria – That's it.

Dee – What?

Ria – I know what I've got to do.

Dee – You do?

Song – I have a plan

Ria
Dee I have a plan
I think that I can make the king see sense.
Dee I hate that man,
but you and me we are the only maidens left.
What if he couldn't kill me?
I could tell him things no other could.
If he didn't know what was coming tomorrow,
He keeps us alive. I really think he would.
Dee I know it's mad but if we do not figure something out.
We will both be dead,
In 2 days time he will have used us there's no doubt.
What if I tell a story, like the ones I've told before to you?
He'd be hanging on till the next day had gone
He'd spare our lives, Our stories might get through.
Dee are you listening
Dee I am serious this isn't a story
Dee are you listening
Dee can't you understand
Dee are you listening
Dee, Dee, Dee

Dee joins in, imitating Ria.

Both: Dee I know it's mad but if we do not figure something out.
We will both be dead,
In 2 days time he will have used us there's no doubt.
What if I tell a story, like the ones I've told before to you?

*He'd be hanging on till the next day had gone
He'd spare our lives, our stories might get through.*

*Dee: This is not a plan you think that you can make
the king see sense.*

Ria I am serious this isn't a story.

*We all hate that man, but you and me we are the
only maidens left*

Ria you're not listening Ria Ria Ria Ri

*Ria this is crazy, Ria can't you understand, Ria
you're not listening, Ria, Ria!*

*Ria are you listening, Ria can't you understand,
Ria are you listening, Ria can't you understand.*

Ria this is not a plan!

*Ria: Dee are you listening, Dee I am serious this
isn't a story.*

*Dee are you listening, Dee can't you understand,
Dee you're not listening. Dee are you listening,
Dee can't you understand, Dee you're not listening.
Dee I have a plan I think that I can make the King
see sense.*

*Dee I have a plan, I think that Dee I have a plan, I
think that Dee I have a plan.*

Dee – Ria is this is suicide.

Ria – We're dead anyway if I don't try Dee. What do we have to lose?

Dee – We?

Ria – Don't you want to come with me?

Dee – Won't that be a little awkward when he gets amorous?

Ria – You can cover your ears.

Dee – [**unconvinced**] I still don't like it.

Ria – It's the best plan we've got...in fact it's the only plan we've got.

Dee – OK Ria...even if you're right - do you really think you can keep him hanging on night
after night?

Ria – I know I can...you have to trust me.

Dee – Fine (**still unconvinced**)...well I guess you'd better go and make yourself presentable
or he'll have you killed for crimes against aesthetics.

Ria – Thanks...

Ria leaves and Dee is alone.

Song – Travel

Dee

So we're going into the palace.

Well there goes my plans to see the world!

It's a wonderful world so they tell me, a magical, marvellous place

*Full of mountains and deserts, jungles and valleys, oceans and rivers and lakes.
All the wonders of nature and thrills of exploring are something I need to consume
I'm just a bird in a cage, a mouse in a box, a lady confined to her room.*

*This life is for living, and there's no going back, to correct all the things that we missed.
This world should be thrilling, full of laughter and sex, and to hell with the bitter that twist,
All the joy into hate, all the life into stone, all the girls in this town into dust,
From their bitter regrets, from their jealousy raged, from their primeval, frustrated lust.*

*Oh to fly through the air and drink from the clouds; to land in the heart of the sun,
Then to stand in the breeze, naked and strong, and feel that your life has begun.
It's a world that I need, a world made of light, and burning inside me that hurts
As I stand in the mist and I ache for relief, from the shackles this prison exerts.*

*As I stand in the mist and I ache for relief, from the shackles this prison exerts.
Just a bird in a cage, a mouse in a box, a lady, a lady, a lady confined to her room.*

Dee exits – scene ends

Scene 2 – The Palace (Scene change involves swapping the positions of pieces of furniture on the stage)

Ria & Dee enter with luggage. They look about, obviously impressed by the location

Dee – Wow...he may be a murderous, lecherous bastard, but he's got good taste.

Ria – Shh Dee...walls have ears you know.

Dee – I'm certain he's been called worse...I'm not so sure about this plan Ria, I think we've walked into a death trap.

Ria – Don't be so over dramatic.

Dee – The man kills women on a nightly basis...I really don't think it's over dramatic to be a little concerned about this.

Ria – Lets just stick to the plan...I'll stop this, and you never know, we might have a good time.

Dee is very unconvinced

Dee – I won't hold my breath...by the way, what exactly do I do whilst you're entertaining him in the next room?

Ria – Read a book? Sew?

Dee – Sew? I'm not some bloody bored housewife. I've got so much I could be doing. So much I could be seeing. I've already read every book we own.

Ria – I would guess the King owns a few more.

Dee – Don't be sarcastic with me Dee.

Ria – Well plan your travels then?

Dee – They're already planned, to the finest detail.

Ria – (**getting irritated**) Well concoct a plan to overthrow the monarchy then...just stop complaining to me about it.

Dee – (**coolly**) Fine...[**Starts to rant**] well I think this is a bloody ridiculous plan and if the King was here now I'd tell him to fu...

The King's presence is suddenly felt (lighting/sound effect). Ria and Dee move closer together and look out to the audience. After a moment Dee turns to Ria, holds her shoulders for a moment and leaves her in the front of the stage. Dee then sits upstage as if eavesdropping on the story.

Song – Ria's First Story

Ria

*I have heard Oh fortunate King
Of a wealthy merchant riding through the land
He ate a date and threw the stone.... Then...
A mighty ifrit appeared and told him
'That stone killed my son, with the stone of that tiny fruit
Come back in one year's time and do not think to run away or I shall kill your family too.'
In a year's time the wealthy merchant sat there all alone.
Soon three men came by
One with a mule, one had dogs and one with a gazelle.
He told them his story and when the ifrit appeared
The man with the gazelle spoke up.
Please dear ifrit, spare this man's life,
I will tell the story of my gazelle.*

*I have heard mighty Ifrit.
This gazelle is my wife, who was barren all her life.
I longed for an heir of my own,
So I took a concubine.
She had a son who was beautiful as the moon.
While I was away my wife turned them into cow and calf
And after a year and a half.
For a feast she said 'kill this cow now,
But when I killed her there was nothing but skin and bones.
Kill the calf she said,
Kill the calf she said
So I raised the knife I raised the knife high over, high up above my head....*

Dee comes forward, to support Ria's story.

Dee: What a lovely story that was didn't it fill your heart with love.

Ria: wait till this evening and you will see How surprising the ending will be.

If you spare my life great lord.

Ria and Dee stand looking forward awaiting the King's verdict. After a moment they both follow him with their eyes out of the room and collapse with relief.

Dee – I have to say Ria, I didn't think he was going to buy it...that's a fairly obscure story, even by your standards...with a pretty strong need for willing suspension of disbelief. What the hell's an ifrit by the way?

Ria – A sort of winged demon creature, very scary...You should have more faith in me Dee, I knew the story would be exactly the sort of thing he'd like; the slaughter of wives and the possible killing of other family members...just his thing.

Dee – You've got a point. Though that is only one story and the night's not over yet. He might have just gone off to sharpen his throat cutting knife.

Ria – Thanks Dee.

Dee – I'm sure he'll kill me to.

Ria – Well that's a comfort.

At that moment the girls both stop having heard something (Musical sound effect).

Ria – [with resignation]. Ha...I'd almost forgotten the other aspect of my role here...wish me luck sister.

Dee – You'll be fine...I think this is one of his areas of expertise.

Ria smiles and goes behind the screen. Dee waits for a while and then sits on the ground.

Song: The Embrace

Dee

*It's the night and I'm stuck in this strange situation
As she took ten small steps, round the back of the screen
Just a smile, and a sigh, and her mind's abdication
She was away, and I was left here to dream*

*It's a bit disconcerting, as I cringe at every moan,
My senses subverting, as each squelch makes me cold
I can see my discomfort just lives in my head,
But that's my sister, my dear sister, being shagged in that bed.*

*So I hum to myself and whistle a dumb song,
To try as I might to cover over the noise,*

*I count up my bracelets, and play with my earrings,
Then she's back, face all flushed, just a poised.*

*It isn't the sex, it isn't the noise,
It isn't the smell of his sweat,
It's simply my sister's being banged like a bass drum,
About three and a half feet from my head.*

**Dee then settles down to sleep. There is a lighting change to indicate night to day.
Ria then enters. Dee wakes and sees her standing there. They hug.**

Song: Greet the Sun

*Both: In the sun my fears should pass
Will this morning be my last?
She must weave her tale again,
When will her story end?*

*Both: We greet the sun
She guides our steady days.
We greet the sun
And we try to forget our love she always betrays.
In the sun our fears should pass,
Will this morning be our last?
We must weave our tale again,
When will our story end?
We greet the sun
She guides our steady days.
We greet the sun
And we try to forget our love she always betrays*

Moves directly into next song with a montage of stories portrayed in mime. This signifies a host of different nights and stories told over a period of time. **Incidental Music between verses.**

Song: Greet the Sun

*Dee: In the sun my fears should pass
Will this morning be my last?
She must weave her tale again,
When will her story end?*

*Ria: In the sun I ought to know
Where my story next will go
If I fail it's not just me
She's my responsibility
They're all my responsibility.*

Refrain