



**Tim O'Brien**

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**The Smallest Camel**

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**BIG DOG PUBLISHING**

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**All through our lives,  
we work and strive  
to buy things  
we don't really need.**

**We get rid of our old junk  
to make room for new junk  
when we should  
just get rid of our greed.**

## The Smallest Camel

**CHRISTMAS MUSICAL.** When three magi notice a star announcing the birth of a new king, they load up their camels and set out across the desert bearing gifts. Sammy, the smallest of the camels, yearns to go along on the journey, but due to his small size, is left behind. Determined to see the new king, Sammy secretly follows the caravan into the desert. Along the way, Sammy proves that though he may be the smallest camel, he has the biggest heart. This uplifting musical features 11 original songs and will charm audiences with its Christmas spirit and message of hope and goodwill.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 60-90 minutes.

## Characters

(4 M, 1 F, 17 flexible, optional extras)

**SAMMY:** Smallest camel.

**MUSTAFA:** Lead camel; leads from the back of the caravan as dominant camels do.

**ZACK:** One-hump camel.

**LIBYA:** One-hump camel.

**ALI:** One-hump camel.

**NAJIB:** One-hump camel.

**SHARIF:** One-hump camel.

**CAMEL RENTER:** Wears desert attire.

**CASPAR:** Magi; bearded, wears fine sheik-like clothing with traditional headdress and band.

**MELCHIOR:** Magi; bearded, wears fine sheik-like clothing with traditional headdress and band.

**BALTHASAR:** Magi; bearded, wears fine sheik-like clothing with traditional headdress and band.

**MARY:** Wears simple traditional woman's middle-eastern veiled clothing.

**LOW-AS-YOU-CAN-GO DESPERADOS 1, 2:** Wear dark clothing.

**SCRIBE:** Bearded, wears a white robe.

**THIEVES 1, 2:** Wears dirty clothing.

**BEGGAR:** Wears torn and tattered rags.

**KING HEROD:** Wears expensive colorful robes and a crown.

**ADVISORS 1, 2, 3:** Bearded, wear dark and fine-looking robes (no headdress).

**GUARDS 1, 2:** Wear armor with pointed helmets; carry swords in scabbards.

**SLAVES 1, 2, 3, 4, 5:** Wear white tunics; non-speaking.

**EXTRAS (Optional):** As additional members of Herod's court.

## Setting

Arabian Desert, 1 A.D.

## Set

The set requires three backdrops.

- I.) **KING HEROD'S ROYAL COURT:** The walls are made of stone (not bricks) and there is one central area where the king holds court. There is a large open window above the throne area. The nighttime sky, which is seen through the window, should depict one bright star that stands out from the rest of the stars. There are soft velvet sofas, statues, and tables filled with serving dishes and food.
- II.) **ARABIAN DESERT:** Depicts sand dunes and an occasional rock. Even though the sky is blue, the star from the first scene is still on the horizon but much fainter because it is daytime.
- III.) **A STONE WALL:** There is a tiny open wooden gate that only a child could fit through slightly to the left of center. There is no sky because the wall takes up the entire backdrop.

## Props

Sign that reads, "The Camels Express" with "For Hire" written underneath	Brass ornament
Astrolabe (See author's note)	Bag of sesame seeds
Sunglasses, for Camels	Heavy necklace with ruby colored stones
Bench	Throne
Table	2 Parchment scrolls
Sign that reads, "The Eye of the Needle"	Toy doll wrapped in a blanket
Beggar's tin	Wooden crib
Coin	Small treasure chest (to represent frankincense)
Bow and arrow	Checker set with pieces
Scabbard	2 Palm branches
Piece of straw	Goblet
Bale of straw	Bunch of grapes
4 Pairs of large pajamas with exotic patterns (pink elephants or the like)	Several serving trays filled with exotic fruit
Sheet for toga	Items for Camels' packs: ornaments, knickknacks, gaudy-looking cloths, sheets/togas, a broken umbrella, small broken statues, etc.
Bottle of perfume (to represent myrrh)	
Small bag of gold	
Broken genie lamp	
Piece of linen	

## Author's Note

The astrolabe is shaped like a dish with all the signs of the zodiac painted on it. Running through the middle is a cross that divides the plate into four equal sections. The person holds it upright toward the object they are observing and looks through from one end of the cross to the other.

## Songs

- Song 1: "The Camel Express" (Camels/Choir)
- Song 2: "The Camel Express Interlude" (Camels/Choir)
- Song 3: "Three Wise Men" (Magi)
- Song 4: "When Everybody Makes You Feel So Small"  
(Sammy/Choir)
- Song 5: "Nothing But Cool" (Mustafa/Choir)
- Song 6: "The Low-As-You-Can-Go Desperados" (Desperados  
1, 2/Choir)
- Song 7: "The Last Straw" (Sammy/Choir)
- Song 8: "It is Easier for a Camel" (Caspar)
- Song 9: "I'll Still Be King" (King Herod/Advisor 1)
- Song 10: "Starlight" (Sammy/Choir)
- Song 11: "Some Dreamers" (All)
- Song 12: "The Camel Express Reprise" (All)

## Choir

The choir should sit off to the side of the auditorium near the front. Though the choir shouldn't block the view of the stage, it should be clearly visible to the audience.

## Scene 1

*(AT RISE: Backdrop 1—The court of the three magi-kings. Although it is a court, the Camels rove freely about. All of the Camels are present except the youngest, Sammy. At up SL is the sign for “The Camel Express” with the Camel Renter sitting beside it looking bored and smoking a pipe. He never changes his bored expression throughout the whole song. The Camels get into a line and break into song along with the Choir. The choreography should be very middle-eastern with swami, almost belly dancing type movement. Song: “The Camel Express.”)*

CAMELS/CHOIR: *(Sing)*

*(Chorus)*

We'll traverse the desert, face every hazard  
And deliver right to your address.  
All across Persia, down to Arabia  
We're The Camel Express.

*(Verse 1)*

Though we're only one-hump camels, we are one of the few  
mammals  
That people will take on a caravan.  
We don't mind the desert heat, and we have our padded  
feet  
That help us to walk upon the sand.

*(Chorus)*

We'll traverse the desert, face every hazard  
And deliver right to your address.  
All across Persia, down to Arabia  
We're The Camel Express.

*(Verse 2)*

Incense, gold, perfume, balsam, spices, silk, linen and gum  
We can carry inside our sacks.

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If you think we're quite contrary, it's just 'cause we're  
dromedaries  
With a thousand pounds upon our backs.

*(Chorus)*  
We'll traverse the desert, face every hazard  
And deliver right to your address.  
All across Persia, down to Arabia  
We're The Camel Express.

*(Verse 3)*  
You can be completely assured, that your things are safe  
and secure  
Inside our protected bails.  
Though we're never in a hurry, there's no need to ever  
worry  
'Cause we still are faster than the mail.

*(Chorus)*  
We'll traverse the desert, face every hazard  
And deliver right to your address.  
All across Persia, down to Arabia  
We're The Camel Express.  
All across Persia, down to Arabia  
We're The Camel Express.

*(The Camels disperse and start milling about.)*

NAJIB: Mustafa, I'm getting bored. We haven't had any work  
in months. I'm afraid that two-hump model that's just come  
out of the Gobi is putting us out of business.  
MUSTAFA: Don't worry, little cousin. You'll be working  
again soon. *(Indicates Caspar.)* I feel something is in the air.

*(Both Camels disperse to the side but stay on stage. Right beneath  
the window, Caspar is sitting and slowly setting his astrolabe. He*

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*then holds it up and starts looking out the window at the night sky. Melchior and Balthasar enter from SL engaged in a heavy discussion. They don't notice Caspar until he screams.)*

CASPAR: *(Screams with delight.)* Ahhhh! That's it! That's the one! *(Melchior and Balthasar stop their conversation and turn to Caspar.)* All my life I've been waiting, and it's finally come. *(Melchior and Balthasar give each other a look, as if this is the first sign of trouble. Turns to Melchior and Balthasar.)* Come and see for yourself. It's in the exact place where they said it would be. *(Melchior and Balthasar move cautiously toward Caspar. Caspar gestures for them to come closer. He looks again through his astrolabe, ecstatic.)* It's beautiful. I've never seen anything like it. It's definitely *The Star*.

MELCHIOR: *(Skeptical.)* The last time you saw *The Star* we ended up in a Roman prison.

BALTHASAR: Yeah, waiting to be fed to the lions.

CASPAR: That's because astronomy is done at night. They thought we were burglars.

MELCHIOR: Look, Caspar, all our friends are out enjoying life, lawn bowling or watching their investments. And here we are still out chasing stars in the desert. We're getting too old for this kind of thing.

*(Caspar turns to Melchoir and Balthasar and takes them by the arms.)*

CASPAR: But we're not like the rest. Lawn bowling would be boring for us. And we don't have any investments.

BALTHASAR: *(Sarcastically.)* I wonder why?

CASPAR: *(Undaunted.)* Remember who we are. We're magi, astronomers. We're...

*(Caspar leads them to front CS. They come very reluctantly at first. But once the song gets going, they slowly get into it, so that by the end, they are almost sold. The choreography should be much slower*

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*than that of the first song, possibly having them step forward when their names are mentioned then having them put one hand on each others' shoulders, walk SL for one line, jump forward again when their names are mentioned, then put their opposite hand on each others' shoulders and step SR. You could also have them each take a line of the verses, but the first chorus should be sung by Caspar. Song: Three Wise Men."*)

CASPAR: (Sings.)

(Chorus)

Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar  
We're three wise men from the east so far.  
Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar  
We spend our life looking at the stars.

(Verse 1)

Ev'ryone thinks we're so smart  
That they call us the magi.  
But, everything that we know  
Comes from looking at the sky.

(Verse 2)

Most men when they get to our age  
By eight o'clock have hit the sack.  
But we'd rather spend the night  
Watching the signs of the zodiac.

(Chorus)

Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar  
We're three wise men from the east so far.  
Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar  
We spend our life looking at the stars.

*(Interlude dance. This is a sort of orthopedic soft shoe with limited shuffle-step, toe-heel-toe. Halfway through the dance, Melchior*

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*throws out his back. Balthasar goes over to assist him and Caspar has to stop to catch his breath for the next verse.)*

*(Verse 3)*

When people see us in their neighborhood  
They often call the authorities.  
Because the two things always done at night  
Are astronomy and burglary.

*(Chorus)*

Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar  
We're three wise men from the east so far.  
Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar  
We spend our life looking at the stars.

*(The song ends with Caspar looking at them expectantly.)*

MELCHIOR: *(Unconvinced.)* But look! *(Motions to the star.)* It's just an ordinary star like any other star in the sky.

CASPAR: How can you say that? Look how brightly it shines. *(Looks through the astrolabe.)* Our ancient priests have been predicting this star for centuries. All their calculations will be in vain if we don't follow it. *(Long pause.)* Well?

BALTHASAR: Okay, I'm in.

MELCHIOR: *(Throws his hands up.)* I didn't want to go on that Nile River cruise anyway.

BALTHASAR: By the way, Caspar, where exactly is this star supposed to lead us?

CASPAR: *(With wide eyes.)* This star means the birth of a great king, one who is both strong and just.

MELCHIOR: Well, if we're going to be seeing a great king, we better bring something.

BALTHASAR: I have some gold left over from the last trip, and some perfume.

MELCHIOR: *(Laughs.)* Perfume! For a king?

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CASPAR: Bring everything, everything you have, because this king will be like no other.

BALTHASAR: How are we going to carry it all?

CASPAR: We'll hire The Camel Express.

*(Camels come to front CS and break into a song with the Choir. The three Wise Men go up to the Camel Renter and hand him some coins. For the first time, the Camel Renter cracks a smile and hands them a piece of paper. The Camel Renter exits SL. The three Wise Men walk behind the Camels, excitedly talking about their trip, then exit SR. Song: "The Camel Express Interlude.")*

CAMELS/CHOIR: *(Sing)*

We'll traverse the desert, face every hazard  
And deliver right to your address.  
All across Persia, down to Arabia  
We're The Camel Express.  
All across Persia, down to Arabia  
We're The Camel Express.

*(As the Camels disperse, Sammy comes running on stage with a small pack on his back. He looks excited.)*

SAMMY: All right, I'm ready. I can even take a few more pounds if you need me to.

SHARIF: *(Amused.)* Where do you think you're going, shrimp?

SAMMY: I'm going with you. I can carry the gold. It's not heavy.

LIBYA: *(Laughing.)* I don't think so.

NAJIB: *(To Sammy.)* We don't have daycare, small fry.

SAMMY: Mustafa, you said I could go on the next caravan.

MUSTAFA: *(Kindly, but stern.)* I don't think that would be a good idea, Sammy. Maybe next time.

SAMMY: But you said that last time.

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MUSTAFA: But this is not an ordinary journey. We're going into unknown desert and it will be too dangerous.

SAMMY: *(Crushed.)* But what about my dream to have my own caravan and bring gifts to children?

ZACK: Ha! That's a laugh.

LIBYA: Yeah! Your own caravan, right. Didn't you just learn to walk last week?

*(Zack and Libya start laughing.)*

SAMMY: *(Undaunted, speaks to Mustafa while ignoring Zack.)* You said if I was going to make my dream come true, I had to start somewhere and going on the next caravan would be a good place to start. You promised.

MUSTAFA: I know what I promised, Sammy. But, I can't take the responsibility of having a new recruit. Not on this trip. Maybe the next one. *(Turns to the other Camels. With authority.)* Okay, let's get packed and ready. We leave within the hour.

*(The Camels slowly start to file off SR and take a few parting shots at Sammy, who looks more dejected than ever.)*

SHARIF: Enjoy your time in the nursery pen, Sammy. *(Laughs.)*

NAJIB: Yeah, maybe you can practice carrying rattles around to all other the other baby camels...just like in your dream.

*(The Camels enjoy a good laugh at Sammy's expense as they exit. [Note: Or the Camels can remain on stage preparing for their journey as Sammy sings his song.] Sammy comes front and center for his song, dreaming about going on the caravan. Song: "When Everybody Makes You Feel So Small.")*

SAMMY: *(Sings.)*  
*(Chorus)*

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Some day I'd like my own caravan  
I'd bring gifts to children one and all.  
But what's the use of having dreams so big  
When everybody makes you feel so small.

*(Verse 1)*

It's hard when you are so young  
Ev'rybody gives you the cold shoulder.  
And when you offer any help  
They just say come back when you're older.

*(Chorus)*

Some day I'd like my own caravan  
I'd bring gifts to children one and all.  
But what's the use of having dreams so big  
When everybody makes you feel so small.

*(Verse 2)*

Since I could walk I've just wanted to  
Hold my own and be part of the team.  
But the only thing I've held onto  
Is my broken, unaccomplished dream.

If I live to be a hundred in their eyes I still will be  
Always just the baby of the family.

*(Sammy stands up, and with a determined look, he sings the last chorus with the Choir.)*

SAMMY/CHOIR: *(Sing.)*

Some day I'd like my own caravan  
I'd bring gifts to children one and all.  
But what's the use of having dreams so big  
When everybody makes you feel so small.  
What's the use...  
When everybody makes you feel so small.

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SAMMY: (*Resolved.*) I know! I'll follow the caravan from a distance. Once we get out far enough into the desert, it will be too far to send me back. They'll have to take me.

(*Sammy skips off SR humming the tune to "The Camel Express." Blackout.*)

## Scene 2

*(AT RISE: Backdrop II – Arabian Desert. The three Magi enter from SL. Caspar is leading them, talking with his arms waving about.)*

CASPAR: When I first saw it rise in the east, I said to myself, that has to be the one.

BALTHASAR: But how do you know what direction to go?

CASPAR: We will move in the same direction as the star, of course.

MELCHIOR: And what direction is that?

CASPAR: *(Points SL.)* Toward the west.

MELCHIOR: But there is nothing there but desert.

CASPAR: If we go far enough, we will come to a city called Jerusalem. The Jewish people that were exiled in our city originally came from there. Once we get there, they should be able to tell us where to find the new king. *(Pulls out his astrolabe.)* I need to take another measurement. You two go to the top of that sand dune over there. *(Motions SL.)*

*(Balthasar and Melchior go off SL as the Camels enter. The Camels, who are all wearing sunglasses, remain silent until the Magi have exited. Mustafa is the last to enter. The Camels look fatigued already. Sharif sits down in the sand.)*

SHARIF: Can't we take a break? We haven't stopped once since this morning.

*(Zack sits down.)*

ZACK: Yeah. What about our 40-minute lunch break? Wasn't that in the union contract?

NAJIB: *(Grumpy.)* And I don't see why we have to bring all this straw. We never did before.

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LIBYA: I haven't seen a khulla plant in hours. I'm starving.  
MUSTAFA: But that is exactly why we have to bring our own straw. Soon, we'll be going into the hottest part of the desert. Nothing grows there. So, we bring our own food.  
SHARIF: I think I prefer the eastern parts of the desert. At least there was the occasional watering hole.  
MUSTAFA: Look, it may be hot now, but just wait until nighttime.  
LIBYA: What do you mean?  
MUSTAFA: Let me tell you.

*(This song, because it is a rap, should be full of rap gestures with baby fingers, pointer fingers and thumbs extended, or one hand over one ear while the other feigns scratching a record on a turntable, etc. This song is sung by Mustafa and the Choir, but the Camels do the rap moves as well. On the last verse of the song, Sammy can be seen sneaking on SL, hiding amongst the sand dunes. The song ends with all Camels in line posed in different rap gestures. Song: "Nothing But Cool.")*

MUSTAFA/CHOIR: *(Sing.)*  
*(Chorus)*

The desert day is hot and cruel  
But night in the desert is nothing but cool.  
The desert day is hot and cruel  
But night in the desert is nothing but cool.

The sun's rays have no mercy  
You can't hide from them even under a tree  
Temperatures reach 48 degrees  
But nighttime brings the coolest breeze

Scarab beetles rest in the afternoon  
Then navigate by the light of the moon  
In the day things just survive  
When the sun goes down, they come alive

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Cobras hunt in the middle of the day  
Slither in the sun looking for their prey  
Hamsters hide from them under the ground  
But when night comes, they run around

*(Chorus)*

The desert day is hot and cruel  
But night in the desert is nothing but cool.  
The desert day is hot and cruel  
But night in the desert is nothing but cool.  
Nothing but cool!

*(Ali suddenly sees Sammy hiding behind one of the sand dunes.)*

ALI: Look what we have here!

*(All the Camels come over to have a look; however, leave an opening so that the audience can see the interchange between Sammy and the other Camels.)*

ZACK: Why you little...

SHARIF: I can't believe it! What nerve!

ALI: He should be punished!

LIBYA: How did he ever get this far?

ZACK: *(To Mustafa.)* He'll have to turn back now if he's going to make it home by nightfall.

MUSTAFA: *(Looks perturbed, but doesn't lose his cool.)* I'm afraid we can't let him do that.

SHARIF: What do you mean? We can't take him with us.

MUSTAFA: We have no choice. We've come too far. He'll never make it back by night, and if we wait till tomorrow, we'll lose a whole day. *(To Sammy, sternly.)* You disobeyed me, Sammy. You should never have done this.

ZACK: Oh great! So now we have to play nursemaid on top of carrying all this stuff.

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MUSTAFA: *(Angry.)* That's enough! *(To Sammy.)* Okay, little brother. You can be part of the caravan, but, you will have to carry your share of the load.

SAMMY: Oh, I don't mind.

MUSTAFA: Everyone give one-seventh of what you have to Sammy. *(Mustafa moves off SR.)*

NAJIB: Gladly! *(He piles on what is obviously more than one-seventh of what he has.)*

ZACK: No problem. Glad to have you aboard, little brother.

*(Zack also piles on what is obviously more than one-seventh of what he has. Only Libya and Ali give the right proportions. Sammy is suddenly weighed down heavily. As the Camels get back in line, suddenly Caspar comes running in from SR as Melchior and Balthasar saunter in from SL. Caspar looks frantic.)*

CASPAR: Quick, circle the camels.

MELCHIOR: What is it?

CASPAR: Bandits!

*(Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar quickly group the Camels into a clump back stage center. They look frightened. Desperado 1, 2 enter from SR. Desperado 1 carries a scabbard and Desperado 2 carries a bow and arrow. Desperado 1, 2 point their weapons at the three Magi and the Camels.)*

DESPERADO 1: Well, look what we have here!

DESPERADO 2: *(A bit of a dimwit.)* Yeah. And look at all those presents. Must be a "birthing" party.

*(Desperado 1 looks quickly at Desperado 2 and is annoyed that his partner's idiocy will blow their intimidation act.)*

DESPERADO 1: You mean "birthday" party! Not "birthing" party!

DESPERADO 2: That's what I meant.

CASPAR: *(Shaking, terrified.)* Who are you?

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DESPERADO 1: *(A little insulted.)* Who are we? Haven't you ever heard of Alla Babbah and the 40 thieves?

CASPAR: *(Still shaking.)* Yes. B-but there are only two of you.

DESPERADO 2: The other 37 ain't here.

BALTHASAR: You mean 38.

DESPERADO 2: What?

BALTHASAR: Forty minus 37 is three. There are only two of you.

*(Desperado 2 looks puzzled and starts counting on his fingers until Desperado 1 intervenes. Desperado 1, angry and annoyed, points his scabbard at Balthasar.)*

DESPERADO 1: Now stop tryin' to confuse us! We're what's left of the 40 thieves. And we're the meanest and lowest.

DESPERADO 2: That's right. We're mean and low... *(Spells.)* ...l-o-o.

DESPERADO 1: *(Losing his patience. Spells.)* L-o-w.

DESPERADO 2: Huh?

DESPERADO 1: L-o-w spells "low," not l-o-o. Oh, never mind. *(Turns back to Caspar.)* Look, old man. *(Approaches Caspar and points his scabbard at Caspar's throat. Caspar starts to shake with fear.)* If you value your life, you'll keep that mouth of yours shut 'cause I don't think you realize who you're dealin' with. We're the... *(Accentuates each syllable.)* ...Low-As-You-Can-Go Desperados.

*(Even though the Desperados sing this song to the audience, all during the song, the Desperados are still holding the group hostage and make all kinds of threatening gestures with their weapons. The caravan reacts with fear and terror. Song: "The Low-As-You-Can-Go Desperados.")*

DESPERADO 1, 2/CHOIR: *(Sing.)*

*(Verse 1)*

We were born midnight on Halloween

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Our mothers both took one look at us and screamed  
We take evil to the extreme  
Stick around you'll see what we mean

*(Chorus)*

We'll terrorize your caravan  
Take your camels and leave you in the sand  
*(Both turn to the audience as if the next line is the lowest of all the other things they've said.)*  
We'd even steal the lunch from a kindergarten  
We're the Low-as-You-Can-Go  
Desperados.

*(Verse 2)*

We helped throw Joseph into a well, cold and damp  
Poured glue into Aladdin's lamp  
Stole all the hotdogs from the boy scout camp  
When it comes to bad, we are the champs.

*(Verse 3)*

We live at the Temple of Doom.  
Even the gladiators think we're a couple of goons.  
We scared the Mummy back into his tomb.  
Don't let us catch you out when it's high noon.

*(Chorus)*

We'll terrorize your caravan  
Take your camels *(Desperado 2 takes Sammy by the reins and pulls him so that he is separated from the rest.)*  
And leave you stranded in the sand  
We'd even steal the lunch from a kindergarten  
We're the Low-as-You-Can-Go  
Desperados.

*(Desperado 1 points his scabbard at Balthasar, who shudders.)*

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DESPERADO 1: So, don't mess with us.

*(Caspar holds the astrolabe up to the sky.)*

CASPAR: Star of heaven help us.

DESPERADO 1: *(To Caspar, indicating the astrolabe.)* Well, what do you got there, old man? *(Caspar is suddenly aware of being noticed and folds the astrolabe in his arms as if to hide it. Desperado 1 comes closer.)* That's a very pretty dish. Let's have it.

CASPAR: *(Holds it closer.)* No!

*(Desperado 1, seeing no ready challenge, puts his sword in his scabbard and grabs the astrolabe in Caspar's arms. He manages to pull it free, but not from Caspar's grip. They begin a tug-of-war. Meanwhile, Sammy, who has remained perfectly still during the whole ordeal, cautiously steps closer to Desperado 1 all the while ducking so low that Desperado 2, who has his bow and arrow pointed at Melchior and Balthasar, doesn't notice Sammy. As Caspar and Desperado 1 continue their tug-of-war with the astrolabe, Sammy opens his mouth and takes a big bite out of Desperado 1's leg. Desperado 1 lets go of the astrolabe, and the astrolabe goes flying and hits Desperado 2 in the head. Desperado 2 drops his bow and arrow and holds his head as Desperado 1 jumps up and down in pain. Balthasar picks up the bow and arrow and breaks it in half.)*

BALTHASAR: Didn't your mother ever tell you not to play with sharp objects?

*(Caspar recovers his astrolabe as Desperado 1, 2 nurse their wounds.)*

CASPAR: Now, get out of here before I sic the rest of the camels on you.

*(All the Camels grin, showing a lot of big white teeth. Desperado 1, 2 hop off SR.)*

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DESPERADO 1: Oww! I knew we should have taken that job with the tax department.

DESPERADO 2: My mother never told me not to play with sharp objects. Did yours?

DESPERADO 1: Oh, be quiet!

*(Desperado 1, 2 exit. Caspar goes up to Sammy and affectionately pats him on the head.)*

CASPAR: What a brave animal. I don't think I've seen this one before.

MELCHIOR: Neither have I. But thank heavens he came along. Let's get moving before they... *(Motions to where the Desperados exited.)* ...recover.

*(The three Magi move off SR, leaving only the Camels on stage.)*

MUSTAFA: *(To Sammy.)* Well done, little brother. You showed a lot of courage.

LIBYA: Good work, Sammy.

NAJIB: Yeah! And since you're such a tough guy, you can carry this gold that's been digging into my back for the last six hours.

*(Najib takes a bag of coins out of his sack and places it in Sammy's pack. Sammy fumes silently. All Camels exit in a line SR. Sammy is at the rear. Blackout.)*

## Scene 3

*(AT RISE: Backdrop 1—The royal court. The star is not visible through the window. King Herod is sitting on his throne just below the window. Slaves 1, 2 are fanning him with palm branches. Slave 3 is doing his nails. Slave 4 is serving him food. Guards 1, 2 are standing upstage right and hold their spears across the entrance. Herod's Advisors 1, 2, 3 are huddled on a bench reading a scroll just to the right of Herod. There is a table covered with expensive gold serving trays full of food to the left of Herod. Slave 5 is standing just behind the table with his arms crossed. A Scribe enters from SR holding a scroll. Guards 1, 2 uncross their spears to allow the Scribe to enter.)*

GUARD 1: Your highness, a scribe to see you.

HEROD: *(Bored.)* Send him in.

SCRIBE: *(Kneels on one knee.)* Your highness, thank you for this audience. I am eternally grateful.

*(Herod is more interested in the food he is eating than his visitor.)*

HEROD: Oh, get to the point. Can't you see I'm in the middle of something?

*(Puzzled, the Scribe looks around to see what it is that the King might be in the middle of, but goes along.)*

SCRIBE: Of course, your grace. *(He lifts the scroll.)* I have been reading from some of our great books, and it seems that soon a great king will come and free us from the Romans.

*(King Herod suddenly stops looking bored.)*

HEROD: *(Out loud almost to himself.)* Oh, no!  
*(The Scribe stands and unrolls the scroll.)*

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SCRIBE: It says here that... *(Reads.)* "...thou Bethlehem...from thee shall come forth a leader who shall rule my people."

HEROD: *(Pointing to the scroll)* Where did you get that?

SCRIBE: *(Puzzled.)* It is one of our great books, your grace.

HEROD: *(Louder, starting to shake.)* Oh, no, you don't. I am the only king here. I spent a lot of time knocking people off to get where I am, and I'm not about to have that taken away from me. *(Motions to Guard 1, 2, who approach and grab the Scribe by his shoulders.)* Seize this man! *(He turns around to see if anyone in the court disagrees. Everyone is silent. King Herod motions to Guard 1, 2 again.)* Take him away and have him executed.

ADVISOR 1: *(To Advisor 2, who is now hiding the scroll they were reading)* Don't worry. He always gets like this when he feels his kingship is being taken away.

*(Guard 1, 2 begin dragging the Scribe off SL while the Scribe pleads with Herod.)*

SCRIBE: Please, your highness, spare me. I was only reading what was in our books. Please...

*(Advisor 1 goes up to Herod and pats him on the arm.)*

ADVISOR 1: There, there, your highness. There's nothing like a good death sentence to calm the nerves.

*(Herod turns away from him and goes back to his throne. He looks a little distressed.)*

HEROD: I need to play patty-cake.

*(Slave 5, who was standing behind the table, uncrosses his arms and goes up to Herod, who is now sitting again on his throne. They begin to play a game of patty-cake. Advisors 1, 2, 3, who were*

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*sitting on the bench, roll up the scroll they were looking at and put it behind their backs. Blackout.)*

## Scene 4

*(AT RISE: Backdrop II – Arabian Desert. The Camels enter SL in a line in this order: Libya, Zack, Sharif, Najib, Sammy, Ali, and Mustafa. They all look exhausted.)*

ZACK: Mustafa, you were right. This is the hottest desert I've ever been through.

SHARIF: No kidding. We haven't seen a watering hole since yesterday.

ZACK: Or any food either.

NAJIB: And packing all this extra stuff doesn't help either. Especially this bale of straw that keeps itching my back. *(Takes the bale of straw off of his back and places it on the back of the obviously overburdened Sammy.)* Here, kid, you can carry this. *(All the other Camels stop and wait for Sammy's reaction. He looks annoyed, but says nothing. One of the pieces of straw accidentally escapes from the bale and falls to the floor. Najib delicately picks it up and walks over to Sammy. Snidely.)* Oh, look, little brother, you dropped one. Here, let me assist you.

*(Najib holds the piece of straw just above Sammy's back and watches it fall. When the straw lands on Sammy's back, there is a long silence. All the other Camels are watching very intently. The music starts, and when the tremolo arrives at the major chord, Sammy suddenly throws off his pack. The bale of straw falls out of Sammy's pack in the process. Sammy sings most of the song directly to Najib, who is all of a sudden a little nervous at this sudden change of character in Sammy. Sammy walks strongly toward him, and Najib nervously backs away. Then just before the chorus, Najib turns to walk away, only to find Sammy suddenly on the other side facing him. Sammy then backs him into the other direction. Song: "The Last Straw.")*

SAMMY/CHOIR: *(Sing.)*  
*(Chorus)*

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All right...that was the last straw  
It's time to take a stand before you make me fall  
I would back off, but my back's against the wall  
Because that was the very last straw.

*(Verse 1)*

*(To audience.)* In life there is work to do

No one is spared

But the load seems lighter

If ev'ryone does their share

I don't mind doing my bit

After all that is just fair

*(Turns to Najib.)* But when you make your bit my bit

Then you best beware

*(Chorus)*

'Cause...that was the last straw

It's time to take a stand before you make me fall

I would back off, but my back's against the wall

Because that was the very last straw

*(Verse 2)*

*(To audience as Najib tries to sneak offstage.)* To be nice to  
others is a thing quite fine

It's better to be pleasant than to always whine

Most people will respect your nature kind

*(Approaches Najib, then suddenly blocks Najib's exit.)*

But there always are those few who will cross the line.

*(Chorus)*

And...that was the last straw

It's time to take a stand before you make me fall

I would back off, but my back's against the wall

Because that was the very last straw

*(Verse 3)*

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When you took me on to be part of this pack  
It was all agreed we each carry our own sacks  
But, every time you dump on me, I think I'm gonna crack  
And that just *(Points to the straw on floor.)*  
was the straw that  
Broke the camel's back

So Naj...that was the last straw  
It's time to take a stand before you make me fall  
I would back off, but my back's against the wall  
Because that was the very last straw.

*(The song ends with Sammy standing right over Najib, who is bent down on the floor right beside the bale of straw that he originally placed on Sammy's back. He politely smiles up at Sammy as he gingerly lifts the bale and puts it back onto his own back where it originally came from. Sammy motions with his head toward something else on the floor, all the while not breaking eye contact with Najib. Najib then sees the piece of straw that he placed on Sammy's back, picks it up, and puts it on his own back while smiling politely. He then sheepishly gets back into line. As the others get into formation, Mustafa comes up and puts his "arm" on Sammy's shoulder.)*

MUSTAFA: *(To Sammy.)* I've been waiting for you to do that for some time now, Sammy. I don't think he will be bothering you anymore.

*(Suddenly, Caspar comes running in from SR. Melchior and Balthasar enter from SR.)*

CASPAR: *(Excited.)* We're close. We should be there by nightfall.

MELCHIOR: Close to what?

CASPAR: Jerusalem. I could see it from the top of that sand dune. *(Points to sand dune.)*

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BALTHASAR: Will the new king be waiting there?

CASPAR: I don't know. But at least they may be able to tell us where we can find him. Oh, I'm so excited. *(Starts dancing around.)*

MELCHIOR: Then we better get these camels moving.

*(Melchior and Balthasar direct the Camels into a line. Caspar goes to the lead and the whole troupe exits SR in a line. Blackout.)*

## Scene 5

*(AT RISE: Backdrop III – A stone wall outside Jerusalem. The sky cannot be seen because of the height of the wall. There is one very small gate just off center SR. Above the gate is a sign that reads, “The Eye of the Needle.” The scene opens with a Beggar sitting by the gate with a tin for collecting coins. Thief 1, 2 are sitting by the gate as well, facing each other. Caspar leads Sharif by the reins. Next Melchior enters leading Zack. Balthasar enters leading Libya. The rest of the Camels follow in line looking exhausted. Once the caravan arrives CS, the Beggar and Thief 1, 2 are immediately focused on the caravan hoping for some financial prospects.)*

CASPAR: *(Loud.)* This gate is open. We can get in here.

*(The Beggar crosses in front of Caspar while Thief 1, 2 go around the other way to check out what’s in the sacks.)*

BEGGAR: *(Holds out his cup.)* Alms for the poor.

MELCHIOR: Where are we?

BEGGAR: You are at “The Eye of the Needle” – the only gate left open to the city after dark. *(He points to the sign that reads, “The Eye of the Needle.”)* Alms for the poor.

*(The Beggar holds out the cup again. Melchior puts a coin in the cup as he looks at the gate. Caspar takes out his astrolabe and starts looking at the sky.)*

MELCHIOR: How are we supposed to fit in through there?

CASPAR: It’s getting cloudy. I can’t see the star anywhere.

*(The caravan forms into a small group CS. Thief 1, 2 come a little closer and eye all the wonderful gifts in the Camel’s packs. Thief 1 tries to reach out and grab something from one of the packs. Balthasar swats Thief 1’s hand.)*

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BALTHASAR: Our camels are exhausted. We need to get them some shelter and rest, not to mention a little water.

MELCHIOR: But our camels will never fit through the opening. It's too small!

*(Caspar suddenly puts down the astrolabe.)*

CASPAR: Sandstorm coming. We have to get inside.

*(Thief 1, 2 try to steal a few more things. Melchior chases them back a few steps.)*

MELCHIOR: And I should run the next marathon. But that ain't gonna happen.

*(The Beggar crosses in front of Melchior and pauses while pointing one finger to the sky.)*

BEGGAR: *(Cryptic.)* It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to get into the kingdom.

MELCHIOR: *(Irritated.)* Thanks for sharing that.

*(Sammy comes up to Caspar and whispers something into his ear. Caspar suddenly gets an idea.)*

CASPAR: That's it.

MELCHIOR: *(Cranky.)* That's what?

CASPAR: *(Excited.)* It's easier for a camel to get through "The Eye of a Needle" than it is for a rich man to get inside the kingdom.

BALTHASAR: *(Confused.)* Translate please.

CASPAR: *(Points to the gate.)* This gate is the eye of the needle. We're rich men.

MELCHIOR: And my grandmother's the Mummy. So what?

CASPAR: We can't get inside because we are rich.

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BALTHASAR: Keep my family out of this.

*(Balthasar swats the hand of Thief 2, who tries to steal something from a pack.)*

MELCHIOR: So what are we supposed to do? Become poor?

CASPAR: *(Calmly.)* Yes. That is exactly what we have to do.

*(Caspar stands CS for his song. As Caspar sings, he takes the articles as they are mentioned from each camel's pack. By the end of each verse, that camel's pack is empty. On the chorus, he sends that camel through the gate. He then goes to the next camel and so on for each verse. By the time the last chorus is sung, Melchior and Balthasar have given up trying to rescue their possessions and are unpacking the camels as well. All of the remaining camels are then sent through. Sammy goes last. The Choir joins in singing on the last two choruses. Song: "It is Easier for a Camel.")*

CASPAR: *(Sings.)*

*(Verse 1)*

All through our lives, we work and strive

To buy things we don't really need *(Melchior and Balthasar nod their heads in agreement.)*

Linen garments, *(Caspar pulls a piece of linen from one camel's pack and drops it on the ground. Thief 1 dives for it.)*

Cheap brass ornaments *(He pulls out a cheap brass object, drops it on ground, and Thief 2 dives for it.)*

Broken lamps, *(He pulls out a broken lamp. Balthasar grabs it possessively and puts it back into his pack.)*

Sesame seeds? *(He pulls out small bag of sesame seeds.*

*Balthasar and Melchior point to each other as if the other is to blame for bringing it.)*

We get rid of our old junk to make room for new junk

When we should just get rid of our greed

*(Chorus)*

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All of your moola is worth nothing to ya  
Five minutes after you've died  
And it's easier for a camel to go through the needle (*Points to the gate.*)  
Than for a rich man... (*Points to themselves.*) ...to get inside  
(*He motions going over the wall.*)

(Verse 2)

Sapphires and rubies, (*He pulls out a heavy necklace full of rubies.*)  
All look quite groovy. But too many will just weigh you down  
(*He puts it on the neck of the Beggar as he passes in front of him. The necklace immediately makes the Beggar's neck drop to his waist. The Beggar tries to lift his head but hurts his back and ends up holding it for the rest of the song.*)  
Robes are in style, but we've so many piles  
We're beginning to look just like clowns (*He ties Balthasar's sash into a bowtie. Balthasar, embarrassed, immediately unties it.*)  
Gold might make you greater (*He pulls out bag of gold.*)  
But sooner or later  
Everything goes back into the ground (*He drops it. Balthasar rushes for it, barely rescuing it from Thief 2. Balthasar puts it safely into his pocket.*)

(Chorus)

All of your moola is worth nothing to ya  
Five minutes after you've died  
And it's easier for a camel to go through the needle (*Points to the gate.*)  
Than for a rich man... (*Points to themselves.*) ...to get inside  
(*He motions going over the wall.*)

(Verse 3)

Silk is quite nice, (*He pulls out a large pair of silk pajamas, preferably with a gaudy pattern [pink elephants would do nicely!]. Balthasar tries to grab his pajamas back but fails.*)

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But if you want my advice

You don't need five pairs of pj's *(He hands the pajamas to Thief 1, who holds them up and starts doing a hula across the stage. Balthasar chases him, but in vain.)*

Perfume's impressive *(Pulls out a bottle of perfume.)*

But if you're obsessive *(Opens the bottle of perfume.)*

You'll scare everybody away *(He holds the bottle under the nose of Thief 2, who takes one whiff and starts staggering from the smell then hands it to Balthasar who puts it in his pocket.)*

Togas and sashes will keep you in fashion *(Thief 2 staggers and then falls down in front of Caspar as if he has died.)*

Right up to your funeral day *(Caspar lays a white toga over Thief 2 as if he were a corpse.)*

*(Chorus)*

All of your moola is worth nothing to ya

Five minutes after you've died

And it's easier for a camel to go through the needle *(He points to the gate.)*

Than for a rich man... *(Points to himself.)* ...to get inside *(He motions going over the wall)*

*(As the chorus is being repeated twice more, Balthasar and Melchior eventually give up trying to rescue their possessions and start pulling things out of their packs and throwing them up in the air along with Caspar. [Note: It might be a good idea to leave out Najib's straw for this scene.] Thief 1, 2 scramble, trying to grab as many possessions as they can. By the time the chorus is sung for the third time, everyone is singing, except for Thief 1, 2 and the Beggar. The last person to go through the gate is Caspar, who is still holding tightly onto his astrolabe. Caspar takes one last look at the astrolabe and then looks at the Beggar, who is crossing in front. As the song ends, Caspar hands the astrolabe to the Beggar. The Beggar looks at it, trying to understand what it is, shrugs his shoulders, then puts it on his head as if it were a hat and exits. Thief 1, 2 are left on stage joyously gathering all their new found treasures. Blackout.)*

[End of Freeview]