

ALL FOR A PANSA
A folktale from India

Characters:

Narrator

Merchant

Wife

Son

Ironsmith's Daughter

NARRATOR: Long ago in India, there lived a wealthy merchant with his wife and son. The merchant was not at all happy with his son, but the mother always made excuses for him.

MERCHANT: He just doesn't listen. I don't know how he can be my son.

WIFE: Don't say that. He's our dear child. He just needs some extra attention.

MERCHANT: You give him way too much attention as it is! I don't know how we're ever going to find a wife for him. Let's face it, the boy is lazy.

WIFE: Please, just give him one more chance to prove himself.

MERCHANT: He's already had WAY too many chances!

WIFE: Just one more, for me. Please? Pretty please?

MERCHANT: All right. But that fool is going to have work for it. He's going to have to think.

[SON enters.]

SON: Hello, Father and Mother. How are you today?

MERCHANT: Fine, fine. I have something I want you to do. I will give you one last chance to prove yourself.

SON: What can I do?

MERCHANT: I am going to give you this paisa. I want you to go to the bazaar. With this one paisa, buy something to eat, something to drink, something for the cow to chew on and something to plant in the garden.

SON: What? How do you expect me to do that with only one paisa? That's not fair!

MERCHANT AND WIFE: *(with hands on hips)* LOTS OF THINGS IN LIFE AREN'T FAIR!

SON: I'll show you, father. I can do it! *(to audience)* Somehow.

[MERCHANT, WIFE and SON exit.]

[STOPPING POINT—ask audience for suggestions]

[SON enters with the IRONSMITH's DAUGHTER carrying a watermelon.]

SON: Here's a watermelon, father. It provides something to eat, something to drink, something for the cow to chew on, and something to plant in the garden.

MERCHANT: So it does. I'm impressed!

WIFE: I knew you could do it, son.

SON: Actually, it was the ironsmith's daughter who had the idea.

MERCHANT: And you don't hog the credit, either. That's two good moves. Young lady, how did you think of such a fine solution?

IRONSMITH'S DAUGHTER: Well, a watermelon takes care of all your conditions.

MERCHANT: Indeed it does. I am proud of you both. Young lady, I would like to invite your family to my house to celebrate. It seems like our families should get to know one another better.

IRONSMITH'S DAUGHTER: Thank you. I would like that.

MERCHANT: *(to audience)* Young people! Just when you're ready to give up on them, they surprise you! And to think I didn't have any idea myself on how to solve that one!