

SINDBAD

Treatment Written by Ted Elliott & Terry Rossio

**CONCEPT:**

SINBAD is a screwball romantic comedy in the tradition of *It Happened One Night*, *Sullivan's Travels*, *Bringing Up Baby*, and *What's Up, Doc?* A somewhat repressed man and a free-spirited woman, each with their own separate desires, must work together (despite their initial animosity) to achieve their goals. In the course of their adventures, they change, bringing out the best in each other, and fall in love.

The reality-world of Sinbad is comedic, even more so than in *Aladdin* or *Beauty and the Beast*. Every character is allowed to have a sense of humor, and the world itself is allowed to conspire to create comedy. All the elements--plot, songs, dialog, situations--are fair game to be played for humor.

**THEME:**

Sinbad is about risk: the courage to risk the unknown, to risk change, to risk your heart. The theme can be expressed as:

Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

'Tis better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all.

Faint heart ne'er won fair lady.

Carpe Diem --'Seize the day.'

**CHARACTERS:**

**Sinbad** - Sinbad is an apprentice map maker--he lives in a world of straight lines and accurate numbers. He has an incredible knowledge of the world's trade routes, ports, gulf streams, reefs and the like, but it is only 'book learning'; he has never actually left Mahrajiapur.

Sinbad's cautious, careful nature has resulted in a conventional, stable, secure life, peaceful and risk-free--which he likes just fine. For the greater part of the story, his strongest desire is simply to get safely home. But in the course of his adventures, his heroic side asserts itself, and comes to understand that only by taking risks do you have a shot at happiness.

Sinbad is the somewhat arrogant, wise-guy character with limited real-world experience (Joel McCrea in *Sullivan's Travels*, Cary Grant in *Bringing Up Baby*) who changes and grows due to a relationship with an exceptional, free-spirited woman.

In terms of character quality, Michael J.

Fox would be a pretty good touchstone (although Sinbad is tall, to better contrast with Peri).

**Peri Banou** - Peri is a smuggler, guide, trader, con-artist, thief, and all-around vagabond-for-hire. Known in both polite and impolite circles, she makes her living, such as it is, on the sea, always on the lookout for opportunity. Risk-taking and impulsive, Peri has little use for the rules and restrictions of society. She's at ease in the lawless frontier, often traveling off the edges of the map where no one has been.

Peri believes in magic and the old tales, and mourns the loss of the magical lands and creatures that once were. Weary of scratching out a living, she hopes to someday make the 'big score' and retire to a life of luxury and splendor.

Sharp-tongued and quick-witted, Peri is Veronica Lake to Sinbad's Joel McCrea. When Peri comes to care for Sinbad, she stops looking out only for herself, and takes the greatest risk--caring for someone else.

Possible voices: Mary Stuart Masterson, Bridget Fonda.

**Gorgia & Yorick** - A dual-villain, actually a couple. Picture Tom and Rosanne Arnold. She's a Gorgon with a head of snakes; he was a knight sent to slay her, but instead fell in love with her. A dysfunctional, bickering couple, they nonetheless truly love each other. Good thing, too, 'cause probably no one else could.

Gorgia is rumored to be so hideously ugly that any person who looks upon her face is turned to stone, so she keeps her face hidden. In reality she is quite beautiful, has an exceptionally melodious voice and a curvaceous body. Her head of snakes is very expressive, with each snake having individual characteristics--one grins all the time, another is pissed-off, another has a vapid look, etc.

Yorick's right arm has been turned to stone from the time he peeked at Gorgia's face. He takes offense easily, is always ready to fight in defense of his honor--or for Gorgia's honor, to whom he has pledged his love.

Gorgia and Yorick are searching for the magic Valley of Diamonds, a Brigadoon-like land. There, Gorgia will drink from the Wish Spring and have her heart's desire come true--which is to turn the world to stone. Perhaps then, her curse will have the opposite effect, and when she looks into Yorick's eyes, he will come to life, and they will be united forever. (Hey, we all need our dreams, right?)

**'Homely' Gus** - a homunculus, a golem-like Chinese gargoyle, one of thousands, made of mud by Gorgia.

Since, technically, they're already 'made of stone' they're the only creatures that can endure Gorgia's gaze (not that they care to). Ugly little suckers, they're a hybrid collection of parts: a monster head, cloven hoofs, elephant ears. With their too-small tacked-on wings they manage to fly, with more speed than control. The homunculi exist to serve Gorgia's will only, and so have no will of their own--

Except 'Homely' Gus. With Sinbad and Peri's help, he decides to be a good guy, but has a continuing problem--a lifetime of being bad leaves him with a first instinct that is usually incredibly wrong.

A single actor could provide the voice for all the homunculi, including Homely Gus. Billy Crystal would be good; or Dennis Wolfberg; or even Rosie O'Donnell.

**Indigo** - Peri's pet Chamaeleon. Able to change colors, blend into any background. An extremely timid creature, preferring to avoid danger if at all possible. Of course, hanging around Peri, it has to face danger constantly. Takes a long time to screw up its courage for even the most minor risks. Loyal.

## **SYNOPSIS:**

### 1. INTRO PERI, GORGIA, YORICK

Night in the city of Mahrajiapur, a great trading port, a city built on pilings and stilts. It is thronged with traffic, as sampans and junks ply its waters, navigating the harbor and canals.

PERI and a thoroughly frightened INDIGO navigate through the fog for a rendezvous with GORGIA and YORICK. Peri was hired to deliver a magic compass, but hasn't found it yet. Peri offers various magic talismans instead--a magic Rope, a piece of Reverse Wood--but Gorgia is furious. She desires the compass and nothing else. Peri is cheated out of her expenses, and left destitute.

### 2. THE MAGIC COMPASS

SINBAD, an apprentice map maker, is offered a compass from a CAPTAIN in payment for some charts. The compass seems to be broken--the Captain claims that it's magic, and can guide the way to the lost Valley of Diamonds. This is, in fact, the very compass that Peri has been looking for. Sinbad takes it--he just thinks it looks cool.

MASTER DAJI is angry at the transaction. He orders Sinbad away on a simple, dull errand--to travel to Zanzibar to purchase a ship.

Daji pretends it is a test of worthiness for Sinbad to earn the hand of his daughter, AMRITA. Really Daji just wants to get rid of the kid.

Sinbad agrees to go on the trip, but tells his friend, VIJAY, that he'd just as soon stay home. Has no real desire to leave Mahrajiapur and see the world; after all, he knows where everything is--he's drawn up the maps.

### 3. AMRITA

Vijay is jealous of Sinbad, because the lovely Amrita has decided on Sinbad as the man she wants to marry. At the docks, Amrita gives Sinbad a very chaste peck on the cheek, and admonishes him to hurry up, get the ship, and impress her father, so she can get on with her life. Despite his better judgment, Sinbad negotiates passage, and sets sail.

### 4. SUPERSTITIONS

As the ship leaves Mahrajiapur, Sinbad hears various sailor's superstitions, and dismisses them. He does not believe in magic. The sailors tell him otherwise, singing stories of the huge Kraken, the flying Roc, the Valley of Diamonds, Cyclopes and Gorgons, etc. They claim they are even now sailing into dangerous, magical waters.

Sinbad's cabin-mate turns out to be Peri, who has conned her way onto the ship. Peri knows that the Captain is a Corsair, a pirate, and is rumored to have the magic compass. Of course he's safely divested himself of that dangerous object--to Sinbad--and is none too happy to find Sinbad, and Peri, on board. The Captain is revealed as a Corsair, and Sinbad and Peri are locked in chains.

### 5. KRAKEN

The sound of wings fills the air. Homunculi swarm the ship, perching in the rigging, roosting on the spars. Turns out Homunculi can sniff out magic, and they've been following the trail of the magic compass.

Gorgia and Yorick board the ship. Gorgia takes the magic compass from Sinbad, and turns the Captain to stone. He crashes down through the decks, slams through the hull into the water below, sinks like a stone ... and boinks a Kraken on its head, waking it.

The Kraken rises, and attacks the ship.

Gorgia and Yorick flee on their barge. Peri drags Sinbad belowdecks to their cabin, where she retrieves her bag of magic talismans. And then the ship capsizes, and they are tossed into the sea.

## 6. CYCLOPSES

Sinbad and Peri, still chained together, cling to a bit of flotsam, and blame each other for their misfortune. They sight land, and paddle toward it.

Sinbad and Peri crawl onto the shore. They stand, immediately set off in opposite directions. A heated exchange, a fight, they tumble down a sand dune--and then they look around, realize they're surrounded. Several ten-foot tall CYCLOPSES point spears at them. One Cyclops asks: "Have the Gods sent you for the Roc?" Sinbad answers "No." So the Cyclopes decide they are strangers and must be put out to sea. Sinbad changes his answer--"Yes, the Gods have sent us." The Cyclopes are pleased--Sinbad and Peri will be sacrificed that night, to appease the giant Roc so it will stop terrorizing their village.

## 7. SINBAD THE SAILOR

As they are dragged off, Peri berates Sinbad for changing his answer. The Cyclopes are insular and superstitious--one might even say myopic. In the village, Peri plays that to her advantage. She tells the Cyclopes that Sinbad, the greatest adventurer in the world, daring and brave, was sent by the Gods to save them. She sings of his many great exploits and adventures. He is Sinbad the Sailor, more than a match for any old Roc.

The Cyclopes are impressed. They agree not to kill them if Sinbad will go dispatch the Roc. Sinbad and Peri are set free at the base of the mountain where the Roc has its nest. As they climb, Sinbad is critical of Peri's negotiating--it's left them between a Roc and a hard place. And he's not in any way an adventurer. He doesn't like to risk, it always leads to discomfort. Sinbad wants a safe, uneventful life. He just wants to get back home and marry Amrita.

Peri is jealous despite herself. She is a little in love with the picture of Sinbad she created for the Cyclopes. Her desire for someone like that reveals a vulnerability beneath her strong-willed, self-sufficient exterior--a side of herself she would never let show to Sinbad.

## 8. HOMELY GUS

A sheer cliff face blocks their way. Peri removes the magic Rope from her bag. Sinbad scoffs at its usefulness, but the Rope quickly grows the length of the cliff face and ties itself to the top. It shortens as Peri climbs; she has to order it back down to get Sinbad. It drops in front of him in the shape of a hangman's noose. Sinbad makes use of it anyway.

Suddenly the Rope lassos out, capturing something--a homunculus that has lost its way, and has been following them. Sinbad asks it its name. The creature is bemused. "Whaddaya mean, name? What do I need a name for? I'm the same as the other guys. Gorgia wants one of us, she just yells "Hey, Ugly, c'mere!"

Peri explains to Sinbad that homunculi have no will of their own. Created from clay, they exist only to do Gorgia's bidding. But Peri thinks she can free it from Gorgia's will. She gets an amulet from her bag: a piece of Back Woods, which reverses magic.

Peri puts it on the homunculus, and Gorgia's influence is negated. As an individual person, now, it must choose a name. It asks what Sinbad and Peri's names are, then considers. "Peri ... hmm ... Peri, Sinbad, Sinbad, Peri ... Well, I like Sinbad better. Call me Sinbad."

But Sinbad objects to a 'homely gus' (mispronouncing homunculus) taking his name. The creature decides that 'Homely' Gus sounds cool; that's what he wants to be called. Peri explains that now Gus has the opportunity to be good, and to choose to do the right thing. Gus has no idea what she's talking about.

For example, Peri says, she and Sinbad are on their way to stop the Roc from terrorizing the villagers. Gus is very hopeful that the 'right thing' for him to do is leave. Quickly. Of course the right thing for him to do is go with them and help. It's always like that--the right thing to do is usually the hardest thing to do.

## 9. THE ROC

They confront the huge Roc. It attacks, chasing them around the mountaintop. They flee, and discover the Roc's nest. It is immense, made up from houses, trees torn from the ground, and a thousand ships plucked from the sea.

With the help of another magic talisman from Peri's bag, Sinbad and the Roc switch bodies: Sinbad finds himself looking out the eyes of the giant bird, and the Roc takes over Sinbad, so Peri can talk to it. Turns out that what the Cyclopes see as terrorism are actually Roc mating patterns. The bird is just trying to attract a mate.

Peri gives the Roc a few dating tips, and promises to send his way any lady Rocs they might meet in their travels. Sinbad and the Roc switch back, and the grateful Roc chooses a ship from his nest for them to use.

A huge shadow falls across the Cyclops village. The

Cyclopes

look up in fear--then become wide-eyed. They cheer. Peri and Sinbad wave from the bow of a junk which the Roc clutches in its talons. The Roc then drops the junk into the sea. A dip of its wings in salute, then it's gone.

#### 10. SET SAIL

Sinbad believes the junk is his, to sail home. Peri disagrees; she thinks they should try to follow Gorgia and Yorick to the Valley of Diamonds. It could be that big score she's always been looking for. Sinbad scoffs; she doesn't even know where the Valley is. She only knows that stupid sea chantey, about the Valley and the Wish Spring and the stars--

Sinbad starts. His knowledge of maps and geography lets him realize that the sailor's old song reveals the location of the Valley of Diamonds. Peri is elated, but Sinbad insists he's going home. Peri pleads with him. She points out that returning home with a cargo hold full of diamonds will go far in impressing his future father-in-law. "C'mon, Sinbad," she says. "Take a chance."

Grudgingly, Sinbad agrees. Sinbad, Peri and Homely Gus set sail for the Valley of Diamonds.

#### 11. SINBAD AND PERI

That evening, Gus asks Sinbad what makes Amrita so special. As Sinbad watches Peri work the rigging in the moonlight, looking able and interesting and beautiful, he is hard-pressed to find an answer--and Gus' guileless prodding is only irritating. Sinbad finally, rather lamely, pays tribute to Amrita's kiss.

Peri is a bit miffed, and points out a single kiss may not be the proper basis for a life-long commitment. Sinbad has had enough; he tells her a kiss can be that, if it's done right--but there's no way she'd know anything about it. Insulted, Peri responds by kissing him--and, whoo-boy, what a kiss. They break, both stunned. Sinbad tries to recover his equilibrium first. "See? That was completely wrong ..." he pants. "Oh, shut up," she says. They try to go to sleep ... but each is very aware of the other on the opposite side of the deck.

The next morning, Peri and Sinbad stir. At some point in the night, they ended up together, Peri's head resting on Sinbad's shoulder, Sinbad's arm around her. They don't mind until they become fully awake and aware--and then they leap away from each other, horrified.



## 12. ISLE OF THE VALLEY OF DIAMONDS

From the crow's nest comes Gus' cry of "Land Ho!" Sinbad has indeed located the elusive Isle of the Valley of Diamonds. Peri and Gus are impressed; Sinbad is not surprised--it's right where his calculations say it should be.

The Isle of the Valley of Diamonds is a huge dormant volcano hanging in the sky. To reach it, they have to risk sailing past the Edge of the World. Sinbad pilots them over the Edge, the ship sailing into a natural harbor with nothing but stars shining above and below.

Sinbad and Homely Gus happily go about loading the ship's hold full with diamonds. Peri wonders about the Valley, high in the clouds above, in the volcano crater, reputedly home of the fabled Wish Spring ... one drink and your heart's desire is granted.

## 13. PERI CAPTURED

Peri climbs, exploring the island. She comes upon a garden of stone creatures, all of them magical, but silent and unmoving: griffins and chimeras and sphinxes. It's as if the island is home to all the magical creatures that have vanished from the world. But they are now turned to stone. One of the creatures is a chamaeleon that looks just like Indigo. Actually, it is Indigo, taking on a rock-color to hide. It tries to warn Peri of some terrible danger. The obvious hits Peri too late; she is captured by Gorgia and Yorick. It is Gorgia who has been turning creatures to stone. They've found the way to the island using the magic compass, and now seek a way to the top.

Gorgia and Yorick debate whether to find Sinbad and kill him. Peri, in an effort to save Sinbad, maintains she doesn't care a bit about him. Meanwhile, Sinbad has worked up his courage to ask Peri if she will return with him to Mahrajiapur. Full of resolve, he comes upon Peri talking, and overhears her as she tells Gorgia that Sinbad is harmless, a fool and a clown. And she certainly doesn't love him.

Sinbad turns away, hurt and betrayed. He risked love, he tells Gus, and all it brought was pain. He should have stayed home, where he belongs. In fact, he should go home where he belongs. Peri's ploy works--Gorgia is convinced that Sinbad is not a threat. Sinbad and Gus set sail for Mahrajiapur.

## 14. RETURN HOME

And so the ship sails into the bay of Mahrajiapur. The citizenry all turn out for its landing. Master Daji is stunned as he surveys the ship. "Is ... is this the ship I sent you to buy? My ship?" "Yes, sir," answers Sinbad.

"Just let me get all the diamonds out of the hold, and she's all yours." "Diamonds ... ?" Master Daji sees the ship's cargo. He throws his arms around Sinbad. "Son!"

Master Daji's change of heart is complete. He formally gives Sinbad Amrita's hand in marriage, never noticing that the bride's and groom's happiness is no where near his own.

#### 15. TRUE LOVE

Homely Gus is confused at Sinbad's mood. He tries to cheer Sinbad up, but to no avail. Sinbad is home, right? He's got his comfortable, complacent life all set, right? He's won the woman of his dreams ... hasn't he? Sinbad looks out to sea, and his answer surprises both of them: "No."

Sinbad goes to Amrita, to break the news. "You know how sometimes feelings change ... ?" Amrita nods, says "You mean like how sometimes something you think you want isn't what you really want ... " "Yes, exactly ... and there's really nothing you can do except be honest--" "Honesty is always good." "Amrita--" "Sinbad--" and at the same time-- "I'm in love with someone else."

They are both stunned. During Sinbad's absence, Amrita and-- of all people--Vijay have grown closer. They are in love. Sinbad wishes them luck and hurries down to the dock. He trades Master Daji the diamonds for the junk, and casts off. With Homely Gus as his crew, Sinbad the Sailor has once more set out to sea.

#### 16. THE WISH SPRING

Gorgia and Yorick search for the path to the top of the volcano, Peri their prisoner. Finally they come upon secret cleft. Peri is forced to use the magic Rope to help them reach the top--and they arrive at the hidden Valley, in the crater of the dead volcano. At its center is the Wish Spring.

Gorgia thanks Peri, looks at her--and Peri is turned to stone. Gorgia and Yorick hurry on to the Spring, hoping to achieve their heart's desire.

#### 17. A WORLD OF STONE

Suddenly there is a loud, familiar call, and the Roc appears, carrying Sinbad and Gus, racing to the rescue--only for Sinbad to discover he's too late. Peri stands before him, unmoving. Turned to stone. Sinbad stares at her. He can barely speak. "Peri ... I'm sorry ... If only I'd trusted you ... If only I'd risked telling you how I felt. It didn't matter if you felt the same way, I should have told you ...

that I love you, Peri."

But she is stone, and cannot answer. Sinbad's eyes fill. "But now ... it's too late."

Gorgia prepares to drink from the Wish Spring. Her heart's desire is for the world to be turned to stone. She drinks. Eldritch fire explodes out from the Spring, expanding outwards. First Yorick, then Sinbad, are turned to stone. A flock of birds is caught in the spell; they turn to stone and drop--plop-plop-plop--into the sea.

The eldritch fire spreads to Mahrajiapur. People turn to stone. Master Daji, Vijay and Amrita are frozen in the middle of an argument. The city falls silent, still.

#### 18. REVERSALS

Gorgia turns, and stares into Yorick's eyes. And lo! He transforms, turning from stone, to animate. He smiles at her, seeing her face for the first time, smitten by her beauty. All of Gorgia's wishes have come true. They kiss. The world is theirs.

Homely Gus stares at Sinbad, and at Peri. He fingers his Back Woods amulet. "Could it reverse what happened to them?" He struggles over the right thing to do. If he takes the amulet off, then he might revert to his old state, and do the wrong thing. What to do? Should he risk it? Gus looks from Peri to Sinbad to his amulet--then removes it.

Gorgia and Yorick lean forward to kiss again--and suddenly, Gus is there, draping the amulet over Gorgia's neck.

The spell reverses, flowing back toward the Isle, a circle contracting. Master Daji, Amrita and Vijay come back to life. The city begins to move again. Beneath the ocean, the Corsair Captain reverts to flesh--realizes he can't breathe, and rockets for the surface. The spell continues to withdraw, racing back across the sea, across the stone garden of magical creatures--

The eldritch fire roars past Sinbad and Peri; they come to life; it roars past Gorgia and Yorick--and they are turned to stone, locked in a forever kiss.

#### 19. RESOLUTION

Despite the victory, Homely Gus is despondent. He's a bad guy henchman again, and he doesn't even have a villain to hench for anymore. But Sinbad points out that Gus gave up the amulet even after he'd removed it. He made the right decision completely on his own!

Sinbad turns to Peri, builds up his nerve again. "Peri, I'm sorry ... I should have trusted my heart ... the thing is, ... I love you." "I know," Peri smiles, "I heard you the first time." Sinbad waits for an answer. "And ... ?"

A sudden cry--among the stone creatures that have returned to life is a Roc! And it's a female! The two Rocs dip their wings in salute to Sinbad and Peri, and soar off into the sky. "I bet she says I love you," says Sinbad. "I bet he said, in Roc-ese, I love you, and she said, I love you, too. Some creatures have manners--"

"Oh, shut up," says Peri--and kisses him. "I love you," she says. Sinbad is again blown away by the kiss. "You know, you still do that all wrong," says Sinbad. Peri smiles. "We'll keep practicing."

They weigh anchor. The sails fill with wind. Sinbad and Peri sail off, to discover more of the magic the world has to offer.