



**A one-act dramatic play**  
**Neem the Half-Boy**  
 by Idries Shah

**CAST**

Narrator 1  
 Narrator 2  
 Narrator 3  
 The Queen  
 The King  
 The Village People

The Fairies  
 Prince Neem, the Half-Boy, who becomes  
 “Kull” later in the story  
 Arif the Wise Man  
 Taneen the Dragon

(If there are not enough students to play the parts, have students play multiple roles, changing their costumes or adding a prop as appropriate.)

Allow the students to think about and create their own props, costumes and scenery. Some ideas on props and costumes are suggested below.

**PROPS NEEDED**

Apple  
 Medicine Bottle (a decorated  
 plastic bottle)

Sword (made from cardboard)  
 Cooking-Stove (a decorated cardboard  
 box)

**Other props:** a cradle, a “horse” (a broom decorated as a horse), “Hich-Hich” town sign, images of upside-down flies, Taneen’s cave (a sheet or blanket draped over a table, for instance), and Taneen’s fire (see costumes below).

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## SUGGESTED COSTUMES

- Turbans and long jackets for the boys (the king's being most colorful)
- Veils or scarves for the girls' heads (the queen's being the most elaborate)
- Wings for the fairies (you might make these out of cardstock and tied on with yarn or ribbon, or by draping thin cloth or sheets of tissue paper over the arms and pinning or taping in place)
- Prince Neem: Pin thin material to his turban so that it covers half of his body (or have the actor stand so that only one side of his body is seen); have the actor practice using only one half of his body until becoming "whole" before the performance.
- Taneen the Dragon: make a long tail such as cutting a pant leg off an old pair of trousers. Tie one end of the pant leg closed using yarn or ribbon and stuff the pant leg loosely with crumpled newspaper until almost full. Students may want to decorate the "tail" with pieces of construction paper, glue and glitter, painting on scales, and so on. Attach the "tail" by safety-pinning onto student's clothing. For the "fire breathing," cut several strips of red tissue paper, or use red ribbon, bunch the strips together and secure only one end with tape or by stapling. The student will hold the secured end gently in his/her fist while blowing through the fist to make the tissue paper flutter. Or, allow the students to think of ways to make "fire-breathing."

In this story, many of the characters' names describe character attributes. Even the country's name is descriptive. Using symbolic or meaningful names is more common in some cultures than in others. The names chosen for this story are from the Central Asian region. (For example, *Hich* means *nothing*, *Taneen* means *dragon*, and so on.) Share these ideas and explanations with the children, so that when they are acting out the story, they can understand the significance of the various names.

## *The Script for Neem the Half-Boy*

**Narrator 1:** Once upon a time, when flies flew backwards...

**Narrator 2:** ...and the sun was cool...

**Narrator 3:** ...there was a country called Hich-Hich...

**Narrator 1:** ...which mean "nothing at all."

**Narrator 2:** This country had a king, and it also had a queen.

**Narrator 3:** Now, the queen wanted to have a little boy for a son because she didn't have one.

**The Queen** (*to the King*): How can I get a little boy?

**The King:** I don't know, I'm sure.

**The Queen** (*to all the people*): How can I get a little boy?

**Village People:** We are very sorry, but we can't tell Your Majesty how to get a little boy.

**Narrator 1:** They called her "Your Majesty" because you always call queens – and kings too – Your Majesty.

**The Queen** (*to the fairies*): How can I get a little boy?

**The Fairies:** We could go and ask Arif the Wise Man.

**Narrator 2:** The wise man was a very clever man, and he knew everything.

**Narrator 3:** So the fairies went to the place where Arif the Wise Man lived.

**The Fairies:** We are the fairies from the country of Hich-Hich. That country has a queen, and she wants a little boy, but she doesn't know how to get one.

**Arif the Wise Man** (*smiling*): I'll tell you how the queen can have a little boy for a son. (*Picking up the apple and giving it to the fairies.*) Give this apple to the queen and tell her to eat it. If she eats it, she will have a little boy.

**Narrator 1:** So the fairies took the apple and flew back to the queen.

**The Fairies** (*giving the apple to the queen*): Your Majesty, we have been to see Arif the Wise Man, who knows everything, and he says that you should eat this apple. If you eat it, you will have a little boy for a son.

**Narrator 2:** The queen was very pleased. She started to eat the apple...

**Narrator 3:** ...but before she had finished it...

**Narrator 1:** ...she forgot how important it was and started thinking about something else.

**All of the Narrators:** And she dropped the apple, only half eaten.

**Narrator 2:** And she did have a little boy. But, because she had eaten only half of the apple...

**Narrator 3:** ...the boy she had was a half-boy.

**Narrator 1:** He had one eye and one ear, one arm and one leg, and he hopped wherever he went.

**Narrator 2:** The queen called him Prince Neem, because "neem" means "half" in the language of that country.

**Narrator 3:** As he grew bigger, Prince Neem went everywhere on a horse.

**Narrator 1:** As a half-boy, he could get around better on a horse, because he didn't have to hop.

**Narrator 2:** He became very clever at riding his horse, and he grew to be a very clever little boy in every way.

**Narrator 3:** But he got bored with being a half-boy, and he used to say...

**Prince Neem:** I would like to be a whole boy. How can I become a whole boy?

**The Queen:** I'm sure I don't know.

**The King:** I have no idea at all.

**The Fairies** (*amongst themselves*): Perhaps we should go and ask the wise man, who knows everything, how Prince Neem can become a whole boy.

**Narrator 1:** So the fairies flew through the air to the place where Arif the Wise Man lived.

**The Fairies:** We are the fairies who came to see you about the Queen of Hich-Hich who wanted a little boy, but he is only a half-boy, and he wants to be a whole boy. Can you help him?

**Arif the Wise Man** (*sighing*): The queen ate only half the apple. That is why she had only a half-boy. But, since that was so long ago, she cannot eat the other half. It must have gone bad by now.

**The Fairies:** Well, is there anything that Neem, the half-boy, can do to become a whole boy?

**Arif the Wise Man:** Tell Neem, the half-boy, that he can go to see Taneen, the fire-breathing dragon. He lives in a cave and is annoying everyone around by blowing fire all over them. The half-boy will find a special, wonderful medicine in Taneen's cave. If he drinks it, he will become a whole boy. Go and tell him that.

**Narrator 2:** So the fairies flew into the air, and they didn't stop flying until they came to the palace where the king and the queen and Neem, the half-boy, lived.

**Narrator 3:** When they got there, they found Prince Neem.

**The Fairies:** We have been to see Arif the Wise Man, who is very clever and knows everything. He told us to tell you that you must drive out Taneen the Dragon, who is annoying the people. In the back of Taneen's cave you will find the special, wonderful medicine which will make you into a whole boy.

**Narrator 1:** Prince Neem thanked the fairies, got on his horse, and trotted it to the cave where Taneen the Dragon was sitting, breathing fire all over the place.

**Prince Neem:** Now I am going to drive you out, Dragon!

**Taneen the Dragon:** But why should you?

**Prince Neem:** I am going to drive you away because you keep breathing fire all over people and they don't like it.

**Taneen the Dragon** (*in a sad tone*): I must breathe fire because I have to cook my food. If I had a stove to do my cooking on, I wouldn't have to do it.

**Prince Neem:** I could give you a stove to do your cooking on. But I must still drive you out.

**Taneen the Dragon:** Why should you, if I stopped breathing fire over people?

**Prince Neem:** I would have to get you to go because you have got a special, wonderful medicine in the back of your cave. If I drink it, I can become a whole boy, and I want to be a whole boy very much.

**Taneen the Dragon:** But I could give you the medicine, so that you would not have to drive me away to get it. You could drink it, and you would become a whole boy. Then you could go and get me a stove, and I would be able to do my cooking, and I wouldn't have to blow fire all over people!

**Narrator 2:** So Neem waited while the dragon went into the back of his cave.

**Narrator 3:** Presently Taneen came back with a bottle of the special, wonderful medicine.

**Narrator 1:** Prince Neem drank it all down...

**Narrator 2:** ...and in less time than it takes to tell...

**Narrator 3** (*as Neem begins to remove the material covering half of his body or turning to show his "whole" self*): ...he grew another arm...

**Narrator 1:** ...another side...

**Narrator 2:** ...another leg...

**Narrator 3:** ...another ear and everything.

**All of the Narrators:** He had become a whole boy! And he was very, very pleased.

**Narrator 1:** He got on his horse and rode quickly back to the palace at Hich-Hich.

**Narrator 2:** There he fetched a cooking-stove and took it back to Taneen.

**Narrator 3:** After that, Taneen the Dragon lived quietly in his cave and never blew fire over anyone again...

**All of the Narrators:** ...and all the people were very happy.

**Narrator 1:** From then on, Neem, the half-boy, was called Kull...

**Narrator 2:** ...which means "the whole-boy" in the language of Hich-Hich.

**Narrator 3:** It would have been silly of him to be called a half-boy when he was a whole one, wouldn't it?

**All of the cast:** And everyone lived happily for evermore.

**THE END**