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Queens Boulevard

by CHARLES L. MEE

Queens is like no other place on earth. It is 46% foreign born.

1. THE FLOWER OF HEAVEN

The Wedding dance
with music
at full volume.

From the great Okinawan pop star,
full-on kitschy music,
The Best of Shoukichi Kina, peppermint tea house, track 2,
Hana No Kajimaya.

The women of the bridal party enter singing and dancing:

Children of the sun are dancing
With flower pinwheels in their hands
Chituntutentun chituntuten
tuttuntutenten chituntu

Children of the sun are singing
Swinging and dancing in the wind
Chituntutentun chituntuten
tuttuntutenten chituntu

Children of the sun are smiling
Even in the rain, even in the wind
Chituntutentun chituntuten
tuttuntutenten chituntu

Children of the sun are laughing
Even when shedding tears in deep sorrow
Chituntutentun chituntuten
tuttuntutenten chituntu

Children of the sun are going
Wherever the wind and clouds are flowing
Chituntutentun chituntuten
tuttuntutenten chituntu

And then, at the end of that,
the men enter singing and dancing with Kina's track 10
Haisai Ojisan
[or it could be they sing something Indian,
equally macho and energetic]:

Hey, man! Hey, man!
If there's a drop of sake left in last night's little bottle
Won't you give me some?
Hey, boy! Hey, boy!
You think I'm satisfied with a little bottle?
Don't say there's none left
OK, man! If the little bottle's not enough, give me a big one.

[and then the men and women sing and dance together.]

Hi, man! Hi, man!
I wanna marry, I'm not a kid any more
Can I marry your daughter?
Hey, boy! Hey, boy!
Marry? No kidding!
You're still too young to talk about such things.
OK, man! I'll wait till my hair turns white.

Hi, man! Hi, man!
What a big bald spot you have!
Hey, boy! Hey, boy!
Bald men are excellent.
My forefathers were really excellent.
OK, man! I'm gonna have cosmetic surgery to add bald spots.

[A big noisy party.]

Hi, man! Hi, man!
Your beard is funny, like the whiskers of an attic mouse.
Hey, boy! Hey, boy!
Laugh at my beard, but women love bearded men.
OK, man! I don't wanna be outdone by you.
Starting tomorrow, I'll grow a beard that looks like
the whiskers of a mouse.

Hi, man! Hi, man!
Last night's hooker was really pretty,
you should go there, too!
Hey, boy! Hey, boy!
In Chiji, Nakajima and Watanji, I'm a big shot.
OK, man! Going around here and there,
I'm wasting my money.
You're wasting your money.

[And finally everyone dances out
and leaves the newlyweds alone for their first scene.]

SHIZUKO
Look, Vijay,
someone gave me a flower.

VIJAY
Oh,
it's beautiful.

SHIZUKO

Beautiful, yes,

I think it's the most gorgeous flower I've ever seen.

VIJAY

Who gave it to you?

SHIZUKO

I don't know who it was, someone at the wedding

she just said you should have this

because you're the bride. She said: here,

take it, it's for you,

it's called the Flower of Heaven.

VIJAY

Is this how it is at Japanese weddings?

strangers give you flowers?

SHIZUKO

No. But

VIJAY

it should.

SHIZUKO

it should.

I love it.

Because it just dropped from the sky on our wedding day.

I hope I can find another one.

Do you know where to find it?

VIJAY

I don't know.

SHIZUKO

I love you, Vijay.

VIJAY

I love you, Shizuko.

Thank you for our wedding
this was the wedding I've always prayed for.

SHIZUKO

If you prayed.

VIJAY

If I prayed
this would have been the wedding I'd always prayed for.
As it was,
it was the wedding I've always hoped for.

SHIZUKO

For me, too.
Thank you, Vijay.

I love you forever.

[they kiss]

VIJAY

Should I get a vase for your flower?

SHIZUKO

I'll get one.
I'm just going to go and lie down a little bit.
It's been such an event.
I think I need a nap.

VIJAY

Right. Good.
Sure.

SHIZUKO

And then I'll see you in a little bit?

VIJAY

Yes. OK. Good.

SHIZUKO

You'll be OK?

VIJAY

Yes. I'll just
have a cup of tea and watch the game.

SHIZUKO

Good.

OK.

[she lingers a moment looking at him
and leaves

and when she goes offstage
he simply turns
takes two steps downstage
and a flower seller enters with his cart

so they are in the streets of Queens

[it could be that the design for the piece is such that
we are inside and outside at the same time
a kitchen table and four chairs are in the middle of the stage
but the back wall is all street:
the front of an Indian restaurant all decorated with lights
a food stand with shish-kebab, burritos, falafel, corn on the cob,
and popcorn
the Korean grocery
the Arab bookstore....]

VIJAY

Is this your flower shop?

FLOWER SELLER

Yes.

VIJAY

Do you have a flower of heaven?

FLOWER SELLER

A flower of heaven.

VIJAY

Yes.

FLOWER SELLER

Do you mean a flower of good fortune?

VIJAY

No. I don't think so.

FLOWER SELLER

Or do you mean a lily?

VIJAY

A lily?

FLOWER SELLER

Or a fleurs de lys?

VIJAY

I was told it was the flower of heaven.

FLOWER SELLER

We don't have that.

VIJAY

Where would I find one?

FLOWER SELLER

No florist shop in New York has such a flower.

VIJAY

How do you know?

FLOWER SELLER

Because, as you can see, I am in the flower business.

VIJAY

And yet, I have seen a flower of heaven.

My wife has a flower of heaven.

So, as it happens, I know there is such a flower.

And I want to give another one to my wife.

FLOWER SELLER

Where did she get it?

VIJAY

I don't know.

FLOWER SELLER

So.

I can tell you this:

it didn't come from New York.

You won't find it in New York.

The truth is,

in my professional opinion:

you won't find it anywhere.

VIJAY

I can ask another flower seller.

FLOWER SELLER

You can ask another hundred flower sellers.

[The flower seller leaves in a self-righteous huff.

You can ask another thousand flower sellers!

[Immediately we hear gongs and trumpets
and the funeral procession starts through.]

2. DEATH

Tibetan gongs and trumpets
and a bell ringer:
perhaps it is recorded music
[the Rain of Blessings from Lama Gyurme and Jean-Philippe Rykiel]
but the bell ringer
rings his bell live over the music.

A whole chanting event
long and slow—
so, death enters the landscape of eros.

And Vijay sees:
it is his friend's mother who has died,
and his inconsolable friend
is the only member of the funeral party.

VIJAY
Shakti. Who is this? Who died?

SHAKTI
Oh, Vijay. It's my mother.

VIJAY
Your mother!
Shakti, I'm so sorry.
You didn't tell me.

SHAKTI
No, because you were getting married
and you didn't need to be consoling me on your wedding day.

VIJAY
I'm so sorry.

[as they talk
the bell ringer continues on out
pulling the casket on wheels behind him
and leaving the two friends alone, talking]

SHAKTI
Thank you.
I'm so sad.

VIJAY
Of course. Of course.
Oh, Shakti, you should have told me.

SHAKTI
I didn't want your day to be spoiled.

VIJAY
What can I do for you?

SHAKTI
There's nothing to be done
as you can see.
Although
it would be very good of you to come to the cemetery with me.

VIJAY
Come to the cemetery with you....

SHAKTI
As you can see,
I'm the only mourner.
This is too sad
for my mother to have no one else at her funeral.

VIJAY
Oh, Shakti....

SHAKTI
Can you come with me?

VIJAY
Oh, you see,
I can't come now
because my wife will be waiting for me to return.

SHAKTI
Oh....

VIJAY
Is there no one else?
No other family?

SHAKTI
No.

VIJAY
No friends?

SHAKTI
My mother was here such a short time.

VIJAY
Not even the grocer where she shopped for vegetables?

SHAKTI
I'm by myself.

Of course, if you can't come
perhaps you could send flowers.

[on the verge of tears]

I mean, you know,
it's wonderful that you've just been married
that you have found the love
we all hope for
even if we're born
with parents we love
still we look for the one who is meant only for us

and then, it seems,
when the time comes that we lose our parents
we see that any love we find in life
lives amidst these other loves we've lost and found and lost,
the love of parents
family
if we're lucky
if we grow as we're meant to grow
nourished and protected by the love of our families and our friends
so that your love for your wife
belongs to this sea of love
of social love
and is nourished and sustained by that
because, as we all come to know,
it's not enough just to experience carnal love
or erotic love
or personal love
because, none of us is safe in our own lives and loves
without the social love that makes a safe place
for our personal love to flourish
the regard, the respect,
and, then, too, as we have come to see,
the recognition of all kinds of love deepens each one
so that your love for your wife is deepened
and honored and sustained
when you act on your love for your friends and their families.

VIJAY

Of course. Of course.

SHAKTI

No doubt your wife understands all this.
And so she would understand
why it might be that you would need to take just a few minutes
to come with me to my mother's grave.

VIJAY

Yes. Yes, of course. Of course you're right.

I'll come with you, Shakti.

I don't know what I could have been thinking.

THE GROCER

Shakti! Shakti!

SHAKTI

Ah, the grocer!

[to the grocer]

Aly!

ALY

Where is the service for your mother?

SHAKTI

Oh, can you come?

ALY

Of course! Of course!

I am coming!

No one told me where to go!

Everybody's asking.

They think I should know!

[others enter]

OTHERS [calling out]

Aly! Aly!

ALY

[calling out to the others behind him]

Yes, I'm here.

Here is Shakti!

SHAKTI

I thought you had forgotten.

ALY

Of course I wouldn't forget!

PATRICK

Shakti! Who was supposed to tell us where to come?

SHAKTI

I didn't tell you?

VIVIAN

Shakti, I'm so sorry.

SHAKTI

Thank you, Vivian.

Do you know my friend, Vijay?

VIJAY

Hello.

SHAKTI

And you know Patrick?

VIJAY

Yes. Hi.

PATRICK

Hi.

[Shekaiba has entered.]

SHEKAIBA

Shakti, I am so sorry.

SHAKTI

Thank you. Thank you.

You know Vijay?

SHEKAIBA

Yes. Hello, Vijay.

VIJAY

Hi.

PATRICK

I was your mother's favorite newsstand, you know.
I saw her every day when she came to get the paper.

SHAKTI

Yes, I know.

PATRICK

Every day.
A wonderful woman. And very smart.

ALY

And sweet.

PATRICK

And sweet.

ALY

It is the best way to die, you know,
suddenly
without any warning.
Hard for the son and the friends
but a blessing for the person herself.
No suffering.

VIVIAN

No heartache.

SHEKAIBA

Nor any regrets.

ALY

No regrets.
This is the way I will want to die.

PATRICK

The worst death, of course,
is the man who takes his own life.

ALY

Yes, well,
because it disgraces the family.

SHEKAIBA

Leaving aside politics.

ALY

Leaving aside politics, of course.

PATRICK

A man who commits suicide,
unless he is doing it for a political reason,
is thought to be a coward.

VIVIAN

Still, I think people who die in this way
should be shown some mercy.

VIJAY

In some countries
they used to drive a stake of wood through the suicide's heart
while he was in the grave
as if it wasn't broken already.

VIVIAN

To me the worst death is dying for love
because you are separated
and miss your beloved....

PATRICK

Because then you are losing the good of life
the thing you live for
the very thing that makes life worth living,
the moment you most want to live.

ALY

Eros and thanatos.

PATRICK

Exactly.

And then they put you in the ground
name, date of birth, date of death,
that's all
maybe a little line from the scriptures
or it might say
devoted husband and father.
More interesting, it seems to me,
if they told you what they were.
So and so, auto mechanic.
Or a woman with her saucepan.
She cooked good Irish stew.
Here is Dr. Murren.
The Great Physician called him Home.
It is, after all, God's acre for them.
Nice country residence.
Ideal spot to have a quiet smoke and read the Irish Times.
Although
then you can't help but think:
the soil will be quite fat with bones, flesh, nails,
corpsemanure....

ALY

Patrick....

PATRICK

Turning green and pink decomposing.
Rot quick in the damp earth.

ALY

Patrick....

PATRICK

The lean old ones tougher.
Then a kind of tallowy kind of cheesy.
Then begin to get black,
black treacle oozing out of them.

VIVIAN

Patrick....

PATRICK

Of course the cells or whatever they are
go on living.
Changing about.
Live for ever practically.
Nothing to feed on: feed on themselves.
But they must breed a devil of a lot of maggots.

ALY

I wonder if we shouldn't be making our way to the cemetery.

VIVIAN

Yes.

VIJAY

Indeed.
I think, then, Shakti,
perhaps I'll be saying goodbye
since now you have so many friends to go along with you.

ALY

You're not coming?

VIJAY

Well, you see....

SHAKTI

He's just been married.

ALY

That's very nice.
Congratulations.

VIJAY

Thank you.

ALY

All the more reason to come along
as the person who
as it were
embodies the very hope that life goes on.

VIJAY

Yes, of course.
And yet, the truth is,
I listen to all of you and I think
you never know when someone might die
it can happen so suddenly
taking everyone by surprise
and the rest of us
what were we doing?
had we forgotten to say goodnight the night before?
were we distracted with something else?
and we forgot to be attentive to someone we love?
and so I think I ought to start my marriage in the right way
and remember from the very beginning
to be attentive
to take nothing for granted
of course I know my wife is not dying at this very minute
and yet I should be with her now
to be sure I start out on the right foot.

ALY

The right foot.

VIJAY

Yes.

ALY

And the right foot would be to leave your friend alone
when
in actual fact
he has just lost his mother?

VIVIAN

This is wrong.

VIJAY

Still, from another point of view....

SHEKAIBA

This seems wrong to me.

SHAKTI

You know, Vijay,
just to come to the cemetery
it won't take much longer
and it would mean a great deal to me.

VIJAY

Of course. Of course, Shakti.
I'm sorry.
Of course.
I beg your pardon.

ALY

Let's be on our way, then.

SHAKTI

Thank you, Vijay, thank you.
You won't be long.
Shizuko will be all right.

[they leave]

3. FERTILITY

[Shizuko comes out tentatively in her lingerie.]

SHIZUKO
Vijay? Vijay?
Are you there?

[her Chinese mother, Min, enters]

MIN
Shizuko?

SHIZUKO
Mother?

MIN
Good. I found you.

SHIZUKO
Found me?
Mother, why are you looking for me?
This is my honeymoon.
I left home.
I'm living with my husband now.

MIN
Of course. Of course.
I've only brought a few guests to see you.

SHIZUKO
Guests, on my wedding day?
Mother, I was taking a nap.

MIN
A nap?

SHIZUKO

I mean

I thought Vijay was coming to take a nap with me.

MIN

Ohhhhh,

you mean:

a nap.

SHIZUKO

Yes, a nap.

MIN

And where is he?

SHIZUKO

I don't know.

MIN

Well, then, it's a good time

for you to meet the guests I have brought.

SHIZUKO

Mother,

I think the time for guests has passed.

MIN

But these are very special guests.

[turning to call in the guests]

You can come now!

[back to Shizuko]

These guests I have brought, Shizuko,
are doctors.

SHIZUKO

I don't need a doctor, mother.

MIN

Fertility specialists, Shizuko!

SHIZUKO

Fertility specialists!

MIN

Because, Shizuko,
you can't begin too soon to think about having children.

SHIZUKO

Having children! Mother!

MIN

Now, now, it's nothing to be embarrassed about
everybody has children if they can.
And especially you don't need to be embarrassed
with these doctors
because they understand everything about it.

1st DOCTOR

The main thing is, of course,
for every woman
her body is a ticking clock!

2nd DOCTOR

The important thing is
you don't want to have a moment to lose.

3rd DOCTOR

Because you want to have a success rate
every time
of at least 20%
and if you can even more:
40%

2nd DOCTOR
60%

1st DOCTOR
100%

3rd DOCTOR
Or 100% in 3 attempts.

SHIZUKO
We are not thinking of attempts just now.

[The doctors all look at one another
and at Min.]

I mean:
we are thinking of loving one another,
of being close
of intimacy
and then,
whatever naturally may come of that,
we will be grateful and happy.

1st DOCTOR
Yes, well, of course.
This is the way we all like to think.

[the other doctors nod in agreement]

Even though, it may be,
from time to time,
our friends will think that we are a little bit naive
or behind the times
to think that we want to live our lives
without the good assistance of science.

Because finally,
human beings have come to live in a scientific age
and to understand this is not a bad thing

or wrong.
Because, science, too, is part of nature.
Indeed!

[he laughs; the other doctors laugh with him]

Science IS nature!
Properly understood.

And, then, too,
we understand that,
as human beings,
we can do nothing nobler
than to nourish life.

Of course, it is not for everyone to have children.
Even those of us who are childless—
as, it happens, I am myself—
can do a great deal to nourish and sustain the human species.

And this, after all,
must be our first calling.

To sustain life
to care for all the creatures in the world
whether we have our own children or not.

And so it is that I am privileged
to bring to you
these dried lizard carcasses

[he brings out a large jar filled with lizard carcasses]

made from the common Gecko
and just a few Gila monsters
and these you will want to pulverize
with a mortar and pestle
and put just a few teaspoons of lizard crumbs

into a cup of peppermint tea every morning.
This is something developed by the Native Americans,
but many people have found it useful.

2nd DOCTOR

And then, too,
as the saying is in China,
you will want to be cultivating the soil before you plant the seed.
And, so,
leaving nothing to chance,
you will want to be having a little acupuncture as well,
since it is well known
that infertility is usually related to
a Kidney deficiency
or to Liver Qi stagnation
or Blood Stasis
or Phlegm-Damp,
and these difficulties
are the result of a disruption of the Ren and Chong Mai.
So you will be wanting to focus on

[he might point to a chart of acupuncture points
as he speaks
or locate these acupuncture points on a lifesize plastic human]

the Moxa, Ren, Du, Ren 4, Du 4, BL 23, Ren 7 and Zigong
as well as the foot Shaoyin, KI 3, KI 13, SP 6, BL 23, and the ST 36

at the beginning.

And then, indeed,
the treatment will take its course.

3rd DOCTOR

And, to be sure,
one ought not to neglect those simple things
anyone can do at home:
a decoction of the white of an egg,
an earthworm in vinegar or

an earthworm in honey
or pounded with cypress leaves;
the bark of an elm
fresh dung
or dung dried and powdered
goat dung kneaded in vinegar
a mouse cut in two
a pebble right side up;
the ash of an old shoe.
Home remedies as they are called
in use since the days of the ancient Greeks
and only recently confirmed effective
in randomized double-blind clinical trials.

2nd DOCTOR
Or hormones.

1st DOCTOR
Or hormones.

3rd DOCTOR
You can always resort to hormones
although
in my judgment
it would be prudent
to try these techniques first.

1st DOCTOR
And your frame of mind
as you might suppose
is crucial.
I recommend to any young woman
embarking on this great endeavor
to say to herself over and over
in the shower
as she is getting dressed
on her way to work
as though it might be a mantra
one or two of the immortal love poems

to put herself in the proper mental space.
I would recommend to you
the poems of the great Ono No Komachi
(translated by Jane Hirshfield and Mariko Aratani)

thus:

Should the world of love
end in darkness
without our glimpsing
that cloud-gap
where the moon's light fills the sky?

Or:

Lying alone
my black hair tangled,
uncombed,
I long for the one
who touched it first.

Or:

Wakened by the scent
of flowering plum....
The darkness
of the spring night
fills me with longing.

Or:

Undisturbed,
my garden fills
with summer growth—
how I wish for one
who would push the deep grass aside.

Like that.

[Music.

A song.

For a sample of this song,

go to <http://www.wingtunes.com/public/songs.aspx>

where it's possible to hear the Chinese singer Wing,
singing in her wavering voice.

And Min sings along with her.]

MIN [singing]

You can dance, you can jive, having the time of your life

See that girl, watch that scene, dig in the dancing queen

Friday night and the lights are low

Looking out for the place to go

Where they play the right music, getting in the swing

You come in to look for a king

Anybody could be that guy

Night is young and the music's high

With a bit of rock music, everything is fine

You're in the mood for a dance

And when you get the chance...

[As Min sings

the doctors settle comfortably into the lotus position

and, from the lotus position

they move their arms and hands

in time to the music.

Eventually one of them might rise to his feet to dance solo.

Perhaps, in time, he is joined by the other two.]

You are the dancing queen, young and sweet, only seventeen

Dancing queen, feel the beat from the tambourine

You can dance, you can jive, having the time of your life

See that girl, watch that scene, dig in the dancing queen

You're a teaser, you turn 'em on

Leave them burning and then you're gone

Looking out for another, anyone will do

You're in the mood for a dance

And when you get the chance...

You are the dancing queen, young and sweet, only seventeen
Dancing queen, feel the beat from the tambourine
You can dance, you can jive, having the time of your life
See that girl, watch that scene, dig in the dancing queen

and then, when the song ends:]

1st DOCTOR

Then, too,
there might be one or two things
we can recommend for the groom
to enhance his virility.

2nd DOCTOR

Where is the groom?

SHIZUKO

I don't know.

2nd DOCTOR

He's in another part of the house perhaps?

SHIZUKO

I don't know.

3rd DOCTOR

Stepped out for a moment?

SHIZUKO

I don't know where he is.

1st DOCTOR

[chuckling—looking around at the others—he knows when he's being teased]
You don't know where he is?

SHIZUKO

I went to take a nap,
and now I don't know where he is.

3rd DOCTOR

[also smiling, knowing it is some sort of practical joke]
He's disappeared?

1st DOCTOR [still smiling]

I don't think you'll find that a groom leaves his bride
on their wedding day.

SHIZUKO

It seems he's gone out
or away somewhere.

2nd DOCTOR [upset now]

What possible reason could a groom have
to go away on his wedding day?

3rd DOCTOR [and now serious]

Do you mean to suggest
that he is in fact truly gone—
that he has left you
that one can only conclude
he's not to be trusted after all?

1st DOCTOR

I think if I had disappeared on my wedding day
my wife would have dumped me instantly.

2nd DOCTOR

Well, if this is how a person behaves
better not to linger and take years and years to find out
the sort of person he really is.

3rd DOCTOR

If this were my daughter
this is not what I would call
a suitable husband.

SHIZUKO

I think he must be coming right back.

3rd DOCTOR

Isn't this just what a man says?

2nd DOCTOR

The first time I met my wife
we arranged to have a cup of tea together
and over tea
the first conversation we ever had
she disagreed with everything I said
every single thing I said
she had a contradictory view.
I should have known right then
this could never be a happy marriage.
I should have left her in the tea shop.

MIN

Men.

What do they want
except to have their own way all the time?
And, if I may say so,
this seems to be especially true
of men from India.

SHIZUKO

Mother!

MIN

What is it they want
except to sit around the house all day chewing beetle nuts
waited on by their wives and children?

SHIZUKO

Mother!

MIN

You might have married a Japanese man
or a Chinese man
and he would still be with you here at home.

SHIZUKO

Mother, please.

MIN

Yes, yes, OK.

It could be true:

it could be true of all men from everywhere
that they are no good!

They will tell you they are going out for a business dinner
and they will end up in a massage parlor every time.

[a moment's silence]

3rd DOCTOR

Yes. Well.

You might almost think it would be better
for a woman to marry another woman.

1st DOCTOR

Indeed.

2nd DOCTOR

But

if it's not your inclination?

3rd DOCTOR

You could make the effort.

2nd DOCTOR

If it's an effort it's not love.

Love should be effortless.

1st DOCTOR

No, no, you need to work at love.

2nd DOCTOR

You need to work at getting along
but, at first, it should be love at first sight
without thinking

without anything
you can't help yourself
because this is love
you respond even without understanding what you are doing
because it is your entire being that responds
not just your brain
not just your left hemisphere
and your reasoning
but your cells and your neurons
and things beyond your understanding
this is total love
and this cannot be denied
because this is what your entire being desires.

MIN

And yet:
what do you see in him?

SHIZUKO

I see that he loves me
he knows me for exactly who I am
and he loves me
he can't help himself from loving me
exactly as I am.
He will do anything for me.
And I trust him to the end of the world.
And I love him, too,
exactly as he is.

It seems to me so strange
a person grows up with her brothers and sisters
shares the same parents, the same world,
the same schools, the same food
you would think brothers and sisters
would have so much in common
and be so close their entire lives.
And then they aren't.
And, instead,
they meet someone from the other side of the earth

who grew up wearing different clothes
listening to different music
hearing such different stories
and this person laughs at the same things you do
he loves the same songs
he loves the same movies
he likes the same shoes, the same dresses,
the same paintings
the same apartment
the same furniture
the same bed
the same sheets and pillowcases
he thinks of me all the time
he always thinks of me
and all he wants is just to be with me.

1st DOCTOR

Well, it's true
when a person finds another person like this
then you have something you will want to treasure
always to treat properly
never to lose.

2nd DOCTOR

To be faithful.

3RD DOCTOR

And patient.

1st DOCTOR

And to embrace trust.

Because you know the story of Orpheus and Eurydice.

To look back, to see if the other is following you,
this is a lack of trust.

A lack of faith in the future.

And, even though we all work without a net
when we jump into the future,

nonetheless, we must take the leap
because
the moment you lose faith in the future, the future evaporates.
You would know what they say in Japanese.

SHIZUKO
What's that?

1st DOCTOR
Iriime nage—
enter in,
enter in fully,
make the commitment,
enter in without thought of consequences,
enter in as fully as though you might say:
choose death.

SHIZUKO
Choose death?
Is this what you come to say to me
on my honeymoon?

1st DOCTOR
Yes.

MIN
Well, I think that's enough for now.
We'll be on our way.
You'll be waiting for your husband to come home.
And you will be, Shizuko,
always in our thoughts.

SHIZUKO
Thank you, mother.

EVERYONE
Goodbye. Goodbye.

1st DOCTOR

You can keep the lizards if you like.

SHIZUKO

Thank you.

[They leave her
and she is left solo
to listen as the music begins for the Subete song
and then to begin to move slowly to the singing,
not quite a dance, more just small steps
maybe with her hands outstretched

and then she joins in the singing
a lovely song of heartache, loneliness, loss, love, sorrow, beauty, and longing:
"Subete No Hito No Kokoro Ni Hanna O"
from The Best of Soukichi Kina
for a sample of this, see Asian Classics on Luakabop.com:
http://www.luakabop.com/all_our_discs/index.html

SHIZUKO SINGS

River flowing, where does it go?
People flowing, where, where do they go?
When the flow comes to the end
Like flowers, let's make them bloom

Cry, smile
Some day, some day, let's make them bloom

Tears flowing, where do they go?
Love flowing, where does it go?
Like flowers, let's embrace them.

Cry, smile
Some day, some day, let's make them bloom

Flowers smile like flowers
People shed tears like people
That is nature's song
In your heart, in your heart, let's make them bloom

Cry, smile
Some day, some day, let's make them bloom

[She leaves.]

4. THE FUTURE

Vijay enters from the opposite side
just as the Paan Beedi guy enters
with his MTV Paan Beedi cart
from another direction.

This cart should look like the cart designed by
Cyrus Oshidar, vice president of MTV India
(exhibited at the Edge of Desire show at the Asia Society in 2005):
painted in large bright colors "MTV Paan Beedi,"
it has beetle leaves and cigarettes, of course,
but also a half dozen large glass jars of bite-sized
wrapped candies, Hershey chocolate bars,
several vases of flowers,
fireworks, condoms, and a framed picture of Khrisha
among other items,
as well as a television set
on which the Indian television serial of the Mahabarata
is playing continuously.

VIJAY
Excuse me. Do you sell flowers?

PAAN BEEDI GUY
Yes, of course.
What would you like?

VIJAY

Do you have a flower of heaven?

PAAN BEEDI GUY

A flower of heaven.

VIJAY

Yes.

PAAN BEEDI GUY

Do you mean a flower of good fortune?

VIJAY

No. I don't think so.

PAAN BEEDI GUY

Or do you mean a lily?

VIJAY

A lily?

PAAN BEEDI GUY

Or a fleurs de lys?

VIJAY

I was told it was the flower of heaven.

PAAN BEEDI GUY

I don't have that.

VIJAY

Where would I find one?

PAAN BEEDI GUY

I don't know.

I myself have never seen a flower of heaven.

VIJAY

But do you know where I might find one?

PAAN BEEDI GUY
I'm sorry, no.
Give me your hand.

VIJAY
My hand?

PAAN BEEDI GUY
Let me have your hand.

[Vijay presents his hand to the Paan Beedi guy,
palm up.]

PAAN BEEDI GUY
So.
[reading his palm]
I see you've found the love of your life.

VIJAY
Yes.

PAAN BEEDI GUY
You must treasure her.

VIJAY
I do.

PAAN BEEDI GUY
and never abandon her

VIJAY
I won't

PAAN BEEDI GUY
where is she now?

VIJAY
She's at home.

PAAN BEEDI GUY

And you're here?

it seems you've abandoned her already!

VIJAY

I've come out to find a flower for her
because someone gave her a flower of heaven
and she loves it
and she wishes she had another such flower
and I've had other girlfriends and if they wanted something
it would just put me into a rage
I don't know why
but with Shizuko
all I want is to know what will please her
and to give her everything she wants

PAAN BEEDI GUY

this is good but where is she?
it seems you've left her on your wedding day
and she is all alone
it may be you've got things out of proportion

VIJAY

yes, that could be true
sometimes I lose all sense of proportion

PAAN BEEDI GUY

now let's have a look at your lifeline

VIJAY

never mind my lifeline

PAAN BEEDI GUY

no?

VIJAY

i don't believe in palmistry, you know

PAAN BEEDI GUY
you don't?

VIJAY
no

PAAN BEEDI GUY
and yet palmistry believes in you.
Have you read the landmark book
by the great Adolph Desbarrolles
Les Mysteres de la Main?

VIJAY
No.

PAAN BEEDI GUY
Indeed.
Even though it's a book that went through 60 editions
in the author's own lifetime.

VIJAY
No.

PAAN BEEDI GUY
Or perhaps you have glanced at his definitive
Revelations Complete.

VIJAY
No.

PAAN BEEDI GUY
You see, if you had done so,
you would know that the Life Line
when it rises high
on the space between the second phalange of the thumb
and the base of the first finger
indicates an ambitious nature,
fortunate in the conquest of wealth and honors.
And when its originating point

is higher than customary—
as yours is—
it is undoubtedly a sign of added vitality.

VIJAY
Really?

PAAN BEEDI GUY
Really.
Even though I sense some skepticism on your part.

VIJAY
And what does my palm say about my marriage?

PAAN BEEDI GUY
Ah. There you see,
I must agree with the Victorian practitioner Mrs. Robinson
and the conclusion she reached in her book
The Graven Palm
that the so-called marriage lines on the palm,
by themselves,
are unreliable indicators.

VIJAY
I see.

PAAN BEEDI GUY
But it could be that you prefer to think of yourself
as a modern man in any case.

VIJAY
Well, yes....

PAAN BEEDI GUY
so, you'd like something a little more scientific

VIJAY
yes, frankly, i think i would prefer it

PAAN BEEDI GUY

in that case, i have just the thing for you
now then i want you to hold these two cans in your hands
one in each hand
and i will ask you some questions

VIJAY

what is this?

PAAN BEEDI GUY

this is scientology

VIJAY

scientology?

PAAN BEEDI GUY

exactly

VIJAY

i call it quackery

PAAN BEEDI GUY

and yet, already, i see from your responses so far
that it could be that you have a serious dental problem

VIJAY

my teeth are perfect

PAAN BEEDI GUY

i don't think so
but i can help you

VIJAY

with my teeth?

PAAN BEEDI GUY

exactly, with a little shiatsu massage
finding just the right pressure points and so forth
which i am happy to perform at no extra charge

VIJAY

no extra charge,
you mean there has already been some charge for this?

PAAN BEEDI GUY

what do you take me for? a philanthropist?

VIJAY

excuse me, but i don't remember agreeing to purchase anything from you

PAAN BEEDI GUY

nonetheless, you engaged my services

VIJAY

not at all

PAAN BEEDI GUY

let me tell you: the trouble with you immigrants is you expect your american
relatives to GIVE you everything
but I have some advice for you

VIJAY

You do?

PAAN BEEDI GUY

You should
be careful walking on the street.
When walking on a city street
you should stop every 10 or 15 steps and look around.
Be careful.
Some people are very bad and want to run behind you
and bang you on the head and take your money.
Sometimes they have panties over their head
to hide from you.

VIJAY

Are you threatening me?

PAAN BEEDI GUY

No. No.

What do you take me for?

I am just trying to be helpful to you.

Here you are a newlywed.

You don't want my palmistry.

You don't want my scientology.

I'm just trying to be a nice guy.

And you don't seem to know too much about how to get around in the city.

You don't even know where to buy flowers.

I'm trying to help you out.

You don't know the first thing about being a good consumer!

Do you know:

you shouldn't always be rushed into buying something whenever you see a sale at some store.

Here in the U.S.

there is always some kind of sale or other going on in the name of different festivals, holidays, and so forth.

I have seen a sale at barber's shop

HAIR CUT SALE: \$2.99,

or when the housing market was not doing so well,

a sale at an apartment complex

VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIAL: \$100 OFF A MONTH.

You should be careful of such things.

VIJAY

Thank you.

[Shakti comes in.]

SHAKTI

Vijay?

VIJAY

Ah, Shakti. I lost you.

SHAKTI

I thought I lost you.

PAAN BEEDI GUY

This is your friend?

VIJAY

Yes, this is my friend Shakti.

PAAN BEEDI GUY

How do you do?

I was just giving your friend some advice.

SHAKTI

You were.

PAAN BEEDI GUY

Maybe you shouldn't leave him by himself for a few days.

He doesn't seem to know the first thing.

SHAKTI

Is that so?

PAAN BEEDI GUY

[gesturing to the chairs around the kitchen table
so everyone to sit down]

For example,

you should know

whenever you are standing in line,

remember to keep enough distance between you

and the person standing in front of you,

or they might get offended.

You musn't stand too close.

SHAKTI

That's true, I think.

PAAN BEEDI GUY

Also

you should not drive your car beyond the speed limit.

Maybe you won't see the police officer,

he/she may be hiding behind a tree,

or any other place where you cannot see him/her.

But he/she might have a laser gun or radar

that will measure your car speed.

And then, if a police officer catches you speeding,

you must stop the car on the right side of the road

and wait inside.

Don't try to come outside your car

or the police officer may think that you may attack him/her

and may also shoot you probably.

SHAKTI

That's good advice.

VIJAY

You think it's exaggerated, but....

SHAKTI

No, no, I mean it.

I'm not being facetious.

It's excellent advice.

PAAN BEEDI GUY

Also, in America the color pink is associated with girls,
and blue is associated with boys.

That is, boys should not wear pink clothes.

There are some colors like green, yellow,
that are unisex.

Anyone can wear clothes of those colors.

Guys should not wear a pink-color shirt

or else he may be mistaken for "Gay."

Unless he is Gay,

then it's OK.

SHAKTI

Right.

VIJAY

Right.

PAAN BEEDI GUY

For your dishwasher
always use detergent specifically made for that.
Don't use dish-cleaning soap,
as it will generate a lot of foam
and spill out of dishwasher
and you will have a hard time cleaning your kitchen floor.

SHAKTI

That's good advice

PAAN BEEDI GUY

For a newlywed especially.
Also,
when at a 7-11
don't take Sierra Mist Free without paying for it.
It is against the law
and you could get in trouble.
It is free from sugar not free to take.

VIJAY

Right.

PAAN BEEDI GUY

Also there are grooves on the sides of many roads.
That mandates you to drive your car in the middle of the road.
As soon as you start driving your car to the side of the road,
the car starts making noise as it runs on the grooves.
You realize at that time
to bring the car back to the middle of the road.

VIJAY
Right.

[Aly comes in.]

ALY
Shakti!
Here you are!
We were waiting for you at the bar!

SHAKTI
I'm sorry.
I came to find Vijay.

PAAN BEEDI GUY
Aly!

ALY
Hey! How are you?
I haven't seen you.

PAAN BEEDI GUY [to the others]
This is a nice man.
He lets me have my cart right in front of his grocery store.

ALY
Come have a drink with us.

PAAN BEEDI GUY
I'm working.

ALY
You have time for one drink.

PAAN BEEDI GUY
Maybe one drink.

SHAKTI [to Vijay]
The funeral guests are having a drink.

VIJAY

Oh, Shakti, I can't have a drink with you.

SHAKTI

Just one drink, Vijay!

You know, it's a part of the ritual
everyone expects after the burial to have a drink
and talk

it would be rude not to do it, too.

VIJAY

You now, Shakti, I need to get a flower for my wife.

Now I've been gone so long

I don't dare go home without a flower!

SHAKTI

Perfect, then,

because this bartender knows everything
he will know just where you can get a flower.

VIJAY

Yes, well. Perhaps one drink then....

SHAKTI

Shall we go?

[they all leave together]

ALY [to the Paan Beedi guy]

How is your little girl?

PAAN BEEDI GUY

Oh, she's very well!

She is in seventh grade now.

Already she knows Latin.

Sometimes she speaks to me in Latin.

ALY

In Latin. Very good!

What does she say?

PAAN BEEDI GUY

Well, I don't know, do I?

5. DOING SOMETHING

SHIZUKO [cell phone in hand]

It seems he's left his cell phone at home!

I don't understand what could have happened to him.

I wonder if I should call the police.

YOKO

Oh, Shizuko, I think it's not good to overreact.

He went out. He'll come back.

SHIZUKO

We were just married!

YOKO

Men, you know,

they go out, they forget what they're doing,

they meet a friend

they need to have a drink in a bar

they don't notice how quickly the time may pass....

SHIZUKO

Vijay never goes to bars.

YOKO

No, maybe not, but maybe just this one time

to have a glass of champagne

to celebrate the wedding

you never know.

What we do know is that he hasn't gone away forever
he will come back
not like my father.

SHIZUKO
Your father?

YOKO
I mean, you know,
I'm sorry
I told you this—
it's nothing to do with Vijay.

SHIZUKO
What?

YOKO
I told you:
when my mother woke me in the middle of the night
and told me to put on my clothes
we had to take my dad to the hospital

and I got out of bed to put on a sweater
and the dirty jeans I'd worn the day before

the ones with the button falling off
and I thought
oh, I'll have to have Daddy fix this for me,
and I walked out of my bedroom

SHIZUKO
Oh, Yoko.

YOKO
and the next time I would ever sleep in that room
would be on the floor beside my sisters
with our arms around each other for comfort.

SHIZUKO

Yoko....

YOKO

And after that I would sleep beside my mother
in the bed that would soon be too big for her.

And I couldn't remember if I had said it
if I had said

I hope you feel better, Daddy
when he went up to bed that night
saying he had some pain in his back

SHIZUKO

I'm sure you did.

YOKO

I couldn't remember if I had said it
and now he was lying on the floor
my mom was trying to massage some warmth back into his feet
and I thought to myself:
he's already gone.

SHIZUKO

Yes.

YOKO

And people said:
at least he had a quick death.
He didn't have to suffer.
And I thought:
those people didn't know my father.

SHIZUKO

Oh, Yoko....

YOKO

they didn't watch him breathe in carcinogenic
dry-cleaning fumes for eighteen years,
be denied a college education because he wasn't an important son,

or see his ungrateful children look at him with eyes full of shame
because he couldn't be an all-American dad.
He never took a vacation from his life of work
just so that his family could live better than he had.
But I would rather have my father
than a three-car garage.
"Whose little girl are you?" he would ask,
smiling and giving me a sloppy kiss on the cheek.
"Yours," I would reply.
"I love you, my daughter," he would say sweetly in his English.
"I love you, too," I would reply.

SHIZUKO

I'm sorry, Yoko.

[she embraces Yoko]

YOKO

Yes.

But this is not how it is for you now.

SHIZUKO

No.

YOKO

We can go and look for Vijay.

Why wait at home pining like Penelope for Ulysses?

As though there's nothing we can do.

We are independent women

we can go out into the world

make our own lives

do what it is we need to do for ourselves.

We can just go out and find him.

Probably he forgot to get toothpaste or something,

and we will find him at the drugstore on the corner.

SHIZUKO

Yes!

OK!

Good!

[Music.

A whole chorus of four young women enter
singing a song of independence, empowerment, and happiness.

Everyone lipsyncs and dances joyously and energetically.

The music is track 4 of Kina's peppermint tea house.
They do just the first part of track 4, Mimichiri Bozu,
and do it twice:

Heiyo heiyo heyo hei
heiyo heiyo don't you cry

At the corner of the village palace
the samurai are standing
How many are standing there, how many?
Three or four are standing
What do they hold in their hands?

[Yoko begins to dance with the chorus.
And, at last, Shizuko joins in.]

Sickles and short swords
The crying baby will have its ears cut off.

Heiyo heiyo heyo hei
heiyo heiyo don't you cry

At the corner of the village palace
the samurai are standing
How many are standing there, how many?
Three or four are standing

What do they hold in their hands?
Sickles and short swords
The crying baby will have its ears cut off.

Heiyo heiyo heyo hei
heiyo heiyo don't you cry

[And finally the whole group dances out together,
Yoko and Shizuko dancing with the group.]

6. SEX

Three cabbies enter, drinks in hand.

1st CABBIE
Here's a table over here.

2nd CABBIE
That's good.

3rd CABBIE
I needed this.

I had these people in my cab
you couldn't believe.
They are in the back
and they start kissing
and they are talking too.
Very quiet.
I can't hear what they are saying.
Then suddenly the woman starts to yell at him
really loud.
Then she tells me to stop the cab.
So I pull over and they both get out
and she is yelling at him,
and then she pushes him and he steps back
and trips over the curb
and falls right down on his back.

Then she gets back in the cab
and tells me to go on.
Just like that.
Like nothing had happened.

2nd CABBIE

I have a strategy for this.
If I see people are about to start having sex,
I keep asking them the directions to where they are going.
I just keep talking.
If they ignore me I stop the car
to get their attention.
Because I don't think I want them
to make a mess in my car.
That's all.

3rd CABBIE

One night I picked up a guy around 25th and Park.
He said, I need to pick up my girlfriend.
So we pick her up—
a blonde with like white stockings.
And they are back there,
and I hear her say, Are we going to do it here?
And I slam on the brakes
so hard his head almost comes into the front of the cab.
And I say:
Not in here!
Not in here!
Because I have to pay attention to what I am doing
if I don't want to have an accident!
And what am I going to do then?
If this is all I can think about the rest of the night ?
How am I going to be able to do a night's work?

1st CABBIE

I don't let anybody do that in my cab.
Not even kissing.
I tell them,
this isn't a hotel room.

[Vijay and Shakti come in.]

VIJAY

Excuse me.

The bartender tells me you can help me out.

1st CABBIE

Yes.

VIJAY

He says you know where there is a good florist.

2nd CABBIE

Sure. A good florist.

3rd CABBIE

You have a good florist just at the corner of 74th.

VIJAY

I need someone very good.

2nd CABBIE

Very good.

VIJAY

I need a rare flower.

1st CABBIE

Ah.

A rare flower.

3RD CABBIE

What for?

VIJAY

For my wife.

SHAKTI

He's just married.

2nd CABBIE

Ah. Just married!

Congratulations!

VIJAY

Thank you.

3rd CABBIE

I had these newlyweds in my cab one time.

Coming from the courthouse.

I've never seen such kissing and touching.

My friend told me they had probably taken ecstasy
but I think they were just newlyweds!

1st CABBIE

You see,

women will take ecstasy these days

and then they don't know what they're doing!

You know

a woman can be a very promiscuous sort of person.

2nd CABBIE

More promiscuous than a man?

1st CABBIE

AS promiscuous as a man, yes!

For sure.

I would certainly say yes to that.

3rd CABBIE

Well, because a woman is a human being.

1st CABBIE

I myself have known a woman—

I mean as an acquaintance—

a woman who had sex with twenty different men in one month!

2nd CABBIE

That's crazy.

1st CABBIE

This is how it is for women....

3rd CABBIE

For some women....

1st CABBIE

For some women.

They will always say to you:

men are unfaithful people.

But many men are faithful people.

Devoted.

Absolutely to be trusted.

And many women are not to be trusted at all!

What women say is

you can't trust a man.

But what I say is

you can't trust a woman!

2nd CABBIE

I hear women in the back seat talking to other women

about how they masturbate two three times a day.

1st CABBIE

And have love affairs.

It's a wonder a man would ever marry a woman.

3rd CABBIE

I would never marry a woman—or a man.

2nd CABBIE

This is why some people think a woman should wear a veil

and have her ankles covered.

1st CABBIE

That's what I believe.

2nd CABBIE

No.

1st CABBIE

Yes.

2nd CABBIE

No.

1st CABBIE

Yes.

2ND CABBIE

You think a woman shouldn't wear high heeled shoes.

1st CABBIE

That's what I think.

2nd CABBIE

And she should be forbidden to ride a bicycle.

1st CABBIE

Yes.

2ND CABBIE

And a male tailor should be forbidden to sew her clothes.

1st CABBIE

Yes.

2ND CABBIE

This is crazy.

You think the windows of the apartment
should be painted black
so no one can see a woman through the window?

1st CABBIE

Yes, I do.

2ND CABBIE

Are you some kind of religious person?

1st CABBIE

No, as it happens, I'm not.

But not all religious people are entirely crazy.

About some things they could be a little bit right.

Because, no matter what you say,

everything you think about a woman

that's what I think, too,

only the difference between me and you is

I would do something about it.

And you think you wouldn't

but you do

only in a different way

maybe not as good as my way

just a different way

that leaves her a little independence

because you think a woman

if a woman has a little bit of independence

then maybe sometimes she might be bad

and if you are lucky

maybe you will get a little bit of her badness

but the trouble for you is

once she sees she likes to be bad

she likes to be bad forever

so after you marry her

she is still the same person she always was

because what you know

and what I know

is

a woman is a very provocative creature!

[Music.

Vijay's ex-girl friend, a young Irish woman, Colleen, enters steps up to the microphone and sings.

She might sing something from an old musical,
from the time of Old New York,
such as Wonderful Town—
or else an Irish ballad,
suitable for an Irish bar.

As the sings
all the guys in the bar are transfixed.]

A Little Bit In Love, from Wonderful Town

MM—MMM —
IM A LITTLE BIT IN LOVE,
NEVER FELT THIS WAY BEFORE.
MM—MMM —
JUST A LITTLE BIT IN LOVE,
OR PERHAPS A LITTLE BIT MORE.

WHEN HE
LOOKS AT ME,
EVERYTHINGS HAZY AND ALL OUT OF FOCUS.
WHEN HE
TOUCHES ME,
IM IN THE SPELL OF A STRANGE HOCUS-POCUS.
ITS SO —
I DONT KNOW.
IM SO —
I DONT KNOW.
I DONT KNOW — BUT I KNOW,
IF ITS LOVE,
THEN ITS LOVELY!

MM—MMM —
ITS SO NICE TO BE ALIVE
WHEN YOU MEET SOMEONE WHO BEWITCHES YOU.
WILL HE BE MY ALL,
OR DID I JUST FALL
A LITTLE BIT,
A LITTLE BIT IN LOVE?

MM—MMM —
IM A LITTLE BIT IN LOVE,
NEVER FELT THIS WAY BEFORE.
MM—MMM —

MM—MMM—
IT'S SO NICE TO BE ALIVE
WHEN YOU FIND SOMEONE WHO BEWITCHES YOU.
WILL HE BE MY ALL,
OR DID I JUST FALL
A LITTLE BIT,
A LITTLE BIT IN LOVE?

[or an old Irish ballad,
The Banks Of My Own Lovely Lee:

How oft do my thoughts in their fancy take flight
To the home of my childhood away
To the days when each patriot's vision seem'd bright
Ere I dreamed that those joys should decay
When my heart was as light as the wild winds that blow
Down the Mardyke through each elm tree
Where I sported and play'd 'neath each green leafy shade
On the banks of my own lovely Lee

And then in the springtime of laughter and song
Can I ever forget the sweet hours?
With the friends of my youth as we rambled along
'Mongst the green mossy banks and wild flowers
Then too, when the evening sun's sinking to rest
Sheds its golden light over the sea
The maid with her lover the wild daisies pressed
On the banks of my own lovely Lee
The maid with her lover the wild daisies pressed
On the banks of my own lovely Lee

'Tis a beautiful land this dear isle of song
Its gems shed their light to the world
And her faithful sons bore thro' ages of wrong

The standard St. Patrick unfurled
Oh! would I were there with the friends I love best
And my fond bosom's partner with me
We'd roam thy banks over, and when weary we'd rest
By thy waters, my own lovely Lee
We'd roam thy banks over, and when weary we'd rest
By thy waters, my own lovely Lee

Oh what joys should be mine ere this life should decline
To seek shells on thy sea-girdled shore
While the steel-feathered eagle, oft splashing the brine
Brings longing for freedom once more
Oh all that on earth I wish for or crave
Is that my last crimson drop be for thee
To moisten the grass of my forefathers' grave
On the banks of my own lovely Lee
To moisten the grass of my forefathers' grave
On the banks of my own lovely Lee

She finishes, looks directly at Vijay and says:]

COLLEEN

Vijay!

VIJAY

Colleen.

[the other guys in the bar are amazed that they know each other]

COLLEEN

What are you doing here?

VIJAY

I was....

My friend Shakti....

You know:

just

having a drink.

[the guys in the bar are following all this,
with intense interest]

COLLEEN

I've missed you, Vijay.

VIJAY

Well,

I've missed you, too, Colleen.

That is to say....

[she puts a finger to his lips]

COLLEEN

You don't have to explain.

I'm just glad to see you now.

I don't care where you've been.

I don't care what you've been doing.

If you'll just come home with me now

all I want is to make love with you

forever and ever.

VIJAY

I....

COLLEEN

No, I don't care, you don't need to apologize

VIJAY

but I....

COLLEEN

No, Vijay, it doesn't matter,

as long as we can be together now....

VIJAY

I have to confess

as wrong as it is for me

I take pleasure in your words.
But, Colleen....

COLLEEN

Probably you long for the past
the way I do
for the person you were at another time
for the life that's been lost
and you think you can never have it back again
you long just
for the simple pleasure of simple attraction
the way it was for us
and you feel regret
for other relationships you've had
people you've known who haven't treated you well
dumped you
treated you with contempt
the bad feeling
of getting caught up in more than one relationship at a time
the frantic confusion that comes from that
and, at the same time,
probably you like the feeling
of having multiple loves all at the same time
because it feels at the same time, somehow, like a richer life
than just being faithful to one person
but now it would be
you will find all love in one love
with me.

[The Irish bartender has stepped into the room
in the middle of her remarks,
and now, wearing a white apron,
a dish towel over his arm,
holding a Bloody Mary in one hand,
and stands to one side to recite Joyce
in a heavy Irish accent:]

THE BARTENDER

Yes, it was her he was looking at,
and there was meaning in his look.
His eyes burned into her
as though they would search her through and through,
read her very soul.
Wonderful eyes they were,
superbly expressive,
but could you trust them?....
Here was that of which she had so often dreamed.
It was he who mattered
and there was joy on her face
because she wanted him
because she felt instinctively
that he was like no one else.
The very heart of the girlwoman went out to him,
her dreamhusband,
because she knew on the instant it was him.
If he had suffered, more sinned against than sinning,
or even, even, if he had been himself a sinner,
a wicked man,
she cared not.
Even if he was a protestant or methodist
she could convert him easily if he truly loved her.
There were wounds that wanted healing with heartbalm.
She was a womanly woman
not like other flightly girls unfeminine he had known,
those cyclists showing off what they hadn't got
and she just yearned to know all,
to forgive all if she could make him fall in love with her,
make him forget the memory of the past.
Then mayhap he would embrace her gently,
like a real man,
crushing her soft body to him,
and love her,
his ownest girlie,
for herself alone.

[The bartender hands the Bloody Mary to Colleen.

All the men—except for Vijay—applaud his recitation.]

3rd CABBIE

I'm buying a round of drinks for everyone.

2nd CABBIE

Good enough.

I'll have a Guinness.

1st CABBIE

So will I.

[the cabbies all go out with the bartender]

SHAKTI

Colleen,
you know,
he's married now.

VIJAY

Yes, oh, yes,
[as tho he had almost forgotten]
I am.

COLLEEN

You're married?

VIJAY

Yes.

COLLEEN

When did this happen?

VIJAY

Just today.

COLLEEN

Just today.

And here you are drinking in a bar?

VIJAY

Well, just one drink.

COLLEEN

Who is it?

VIJAY

Shizuko.

COLLEEN

Shizuko.

VIJAY

Yes.

COLLEEN

What do you see in her?

VIJAY

Well, she's very beautiful, you know—
although, in truth:

I think that's the least of it.

She's very sweet,

and honest

in the deepest way

in her feelings and in what she says

so clear,

lucid really,

she makes a real effort to say what it is she really feels

so I know always

this is who she is

this is the person I am with

I can count on her

this is real

and so I know where I am

and this is home for me
where I feel warm and safe
and happy
and alive
and I know this is just going to go on and on
forever.

Plus she's just charming
and fun to be with at parties
and she always wants to go somewhere we've never been before
and she surprises me all the time
with what she sees
what she notices
what she thinks of it
what she has to say about it
things I've never thought about
and the books she reads
and then we'll get in bed
and she will just chat and chat and chat
about all these things.

And then, too, she's really funny,
and we laugh at the same jokes.

[A moment's silence,
and then Colleen throws the Bloody Mary at him.]

VIJAY
What was that?

COLLEEN
A bloody Mary.

[she turns and storms out
he's at a total loss]

VIJAY

Look at me now
I'm a wreck.
I need a shower.

SHAKTI

There's a Russian bath just around the corner
you could have a shower.

VIJAY

I don't think I want to go to a Russian bath
and sit with all those naked guys.

SHAKTI

I know this place, Vijay,
these are nice guys, very welcoming
you'll have a good time.

VIJAY

You'll come with me?

SHAKTI

I'll join you there.
I'll just say goodbye to the funeral guests
and then I'll be with you.

[Music.

As Shakti leaves,
the guys from the Russian bath enter
towels around their naked waists,
singing.]

7. UNFAITHFUL HUSBANDS AND WIVES

We hear the singing of the Pakistani singers
Rizwan-Muazzam Qawalli
who sing the music of the Sufi mystics of Islam,

rousing music
meant to transcend cultural, language and religious barriers
and encourage harmony and peace.

[for a sample, go to <http://realworldrecords.com/rizwan/>]

I'd recommend track 3 from their CD A Better Destiny,
Dil wali cal carni/Talk of the Heart.

They don't sing in English, of course,
but here is a translation for the supertitles:

I want my beloved with me today
so that I can talk of the feelings in my heart.
Leave your pretty portrait in the eyes of my mind
so that I can see you whenever I wish
I am forever lovesick
What will happen to me?
My heart starts palpitating so fast the moment you leave my eyes
When I see you I forget the whole world.

And all four of our guys in towels
are singing along
and/or dancing to the music.

1st BATHER
So, you are seeking refuge?

VIJAY
Oh, no, I....

2nd BATHER
Just getting out of the house?

VIJAY
No....

3rd BATHER
Women can be difficult.

2nd BATHER

There are certain aspects of a woman
that a man doesn't know
until he begins to live with her every day.

4th BATHER

There was the wife of Vajrasara
you remember,
whom he loved to distraction
and then, one time,
when he left her on her own for a month
he was told when he got back home
that she had had an affair with another man.
And so he told his wife that had to go on another trip
and that this time he would take her along with him.
And when they got out into the country
into the woods,
and they were alone there,
he said to her he had heard she had had an affair with another man
and that she should tell him the truth about it
or he would punish her.
And she said, so,
if you have made up your mind
why are you questioning me?
Do whatever you like with me.
And so he tied her up to a tree
and began to beat her with creepers.
He stripped off her clothes,
but then
when he saw her naked
he was filled with such desire
that he asked her to make love with him.
And she said
I will, if you let me tie you up
and beat you with creepers as you did to me.
And so, he let her tie him up,
and she tied him tightly to a big tree
and then she took a sword
and cut off his nose and his ears

and dressed herself up as a man
and left him there,
and, even after he was found in the woods and set free
he never found his wife again.

3rd BATHER

This is how it is sometimes with a woman.

2nd BATHER

You can't leave a woman on her own.

3rd BATHER

And yet
you can't be sure.
Even if sometimes you are with her all the time
she can sneak off.

1st BATHER

Exactly
like the woman, you remember, what's her name
whose husband never left her side
and still she managed to have a love affair
with that fellow from Bay Ridge
and the night she went to see him in the middle of the night
and he, it seems, had been drinking
or it may have been even worse with drugs
and he bit off her nose while they were making love
bit her nose right off
and she went home
and slipped back into bed with her husband
and then pretended she had just awakened
in the middle of the night
she began to scream
and all the family came in
and she said her husband had bitten off her nose
and her husband was taken away
I think he's still in jail.

3rd BATHER

Or the woman from Rego Park
who had a lover
and wanted to keep him around the house
even though, of course, her husband was at home, too,
and so she found some crackpot to give her a mantra
so that she could turn her lover into a monkey on a leash
and her lover agreed to be turned into a monkey,
thinking, oh, good, I can be with her all the time
and her husband won't even know
I'll have free room and board
and make love with her day and night
and then, finally, she got tired of her monkey
and so she took him to the Bronx zoo and left him there.

1st BATHER

No.

3rd bather

Yes.

VIJAY

I think I need to leave.

2nd BATHER

Has your wife been unfaithful to you?

VIJAY

No.

Certainly not.

But I think I should get home....

1ST BATHER

You don't want to leave a woman on her own.

2nd BATHER

No.

VIJAY

Are none of you married?

3rd BATHER

Of course we are
all of us.

VIJAY

And yet here you are
and your wives are home alone?

[The men all look at one another in alarm.]

Shakti enters in a rush.]

SHAKTI

Vijay!
Mrs. Purefoy is in the hospital!

VIJAY

Mrs. Purefoy!
What's the trouble?

SHAKTI

There is no trouble—that is to say, no trouble in a way—
she's having a baby.

VIJAY

A baby!
How do you know?

SHAKTI

She was a friend of my mother's.
Isn't she a friend of yours?

VIJAY

Yes.

SHAKTI

We need to go and visit her.

VIJAY

Ah, yes, visit her,
you know, Shakti, I hardly know her,
I can't visit her just now....

SHAKTI

But she's in labor there's no time,
soon she will deliver.

VIJAY

A woman doesn't want visitors when she's in labor.

SHAKTI

She'll want to know we're there, Vijay.
Who else does she have?

VIJAY

Her husband!

SHAKTI

He's gone off on a trip.
You know he's always travelling.

[All the men look at one another again.]

This is a time she'll be needing all the friends she has.

VIJAY

Nonetheless....

SHAKTI

You know, Vijay,
I don't want to suggest you're not ready for marriage
just because you don't seem to recognize the obligations
of family and community
although

I say this as your friend
a person could wonder if you are quite a grownup
ready to take on grownup responsibilities
and behave like a citizen in your neighborhood

or even
one might wonder
whether or not
you are someone who even welcomes new life into the world
whether you are the sort of person who wants
to welcome children
or you'd rather still be the child yourself.

VIJAY
Shakti, please....

SHAKTI
If you won't honor life
what do you have left to honor?
do you honor death and extinction?

VIJAY
Shakti....

SHAKTI
Is it not a beautiful thing:
that new life comes of love?
People say these days
marriage is no longer about property rights
or even procreation
it's only about romance and love
a person might choose to have children or not
but still choose to get married.
And for sure
a gay person might choose to get married
and not think about having children
or even have children
but still recognize
that in making a commitment to another person

the main thing is
this is a microcosm to making a commitment to life itself
sustaining and nurturing life....

VIJAY

Shakti, you've said all this....

SHAKTI

Because love
love should nurture the world
and everyone in it
because don't forget, Vijay
the Greek idea is that love is not just a luxury
that comes along after you've acquired all the other luxuries of life
but love is essential
love is the glue of the universe
without love
the universe just flies apart into chaos and darkness.

So.

Wouldn't you think
ten minutes to visit Mrs. Purefoy
this would be a good thing for you to do.

VIJAY

OK. OK, Shakti.

But this is the last thing I will do before I need to get this flower
and take it home to Shizuko.

SHAKTI

No problem.

We'll do that. Next thing. Without fail.

[As everyone gathers themselves up to leave.]

1st BATHER

You are looking for some flowers?

VIJAY

A very special flower.

2nd BATHER

My brother in law is a florist.

What is it you are looking for?

VIJAY

I'm looking for a flower of heaven.

3rd BATHER

A flower of heaven?

VIJAY

Yes.

2nd BATHER

Do you mean a flower of good fortune?

VIJAY

No. I mean a flower of heaven.

[They are almost all out.]

FLOWER SELLER

Or do you mean a lily?

VIJAY

A lily? No. No.

FLOWER SELLER

Or a fleurs de lys?....

[They're gone.]

8. FREEDOM

[The women all come on dancing with this song,
also from Shoukichi Kina:]

Jing Jing (Firefly)

Firefly, firefly, drink water from the sake shop

Come down, firefly

Go fly away, firefly

Firefly, firefly, drink water from the potters' district

Come down, firefly

Go fly away, firefly

Firefly, firefly, drink water from the Kumuji district

Come down, firefly

Go fly away, firefly

ESTHER [to Shizuko]

You see, it's been good for you to get out of the house....

SHIZUKO

But still I haven't found him.

VIVIAN

Probably he's going to come right back,
but in the meantime....

VIVIAN

It's good to spend a little time with your friends.

SHEKAIBA

Get out in the world.

ESTHER

Have a life.

VIVIAN

We got some things for you to cheer you up:

[taking them out to give to Shizuko]

A 7-Up handbag.

A Coca Cola handbag with sequins.

ESTHER

Mesh stockings.

High heels.

SHEKAIBA [giving Shizuko something from Hello Kitty]

Hello Kitty!

SHIZUKO

Thank you, I love these!

I just love these!

VIVIAN

Maybe you should forget about him

if this is the way he is going to be.

SHIZUKO

How can I forget him?

I love him. He's my whole life.

I think I just need to go back home and wait for him

no matter how long it takes.

ESTHER

Go home and wait for him

to come home

because of what?

Because he's gotten hungry at last?

Because he needs to do his laundry?

Because what is a man after all

if not the most dependent sort of creature in the world?

Useless and pathetic.

Who has no need greater than to be

protected and admired, guided, and sheltered

by Mama

to be at home, at home
where he can spend his time
wallowing in basic animal activities:
eating, sleeping relaxing
and being soothed by Mama:
passive, rattle-headed
Daddy's Girl,
ever eager for approval,
for a pat on the head,
for the "respect" of any passing piece of garbage
mindless ministrator to physical needs,
soother of the weary,
booster of the puny ego,
appreciator of the contemptible,
a hot water bottle with tits.

And then a man will make a society that is not a community
but merely a collection of isolated family units.

Why?

desperately insecure,
fearing his woman will leave him
if she is exposed to other men
or to anything remotely resembling life,
the male seeks to isolate her from other men
and from what little civilization there is,
so he moves her out to the suburbs,
a collection of self-absorbed couples and their kids.

And there is yet another reason

for the male to isolate himself:

every man is an island.

Trapped inside himself,

emotionally isolated,

unable to relate,

the male has a horror of civilization, people, cities,

situations requiring an ability to understand

and relate to people.

So, like a scared rabbit, he scurries off,
dragging Daddy's little asshole along with him
to the wilderness, the suburbs,
where he can fuck and breed undisturbed.

Men cannot co-operate to achieve a common end,
because each man's end is all the pussy for himself.
The male cannot progress socially,
but merely swings back and forth
from isolation to gangbanging.

VIVIAN

You're a lucky woman, Shizuko,
everyone knows that
who wouldn't hope for the wonderful love you've found
but also,
you need to have your own life
be an independent woman
you can't just wilt away waiting up at home
you need to live
and have adventures
so that when he does return
you will be the sort of woman he can love
and admire and want to be with his entire life
he doesn't want a wall flower for a wife
someone he can walk all over
leave and come back leave and come back
but a partner equal to himself
he wants a real woman
who has her own energy and strength and happiness and freedom
that she brings to the marriage

let him come back and find that you are gone
and then maybe he won't go off wandering again

ESTHER

Right.

SHEKAIBA

Right.

[Music!

Some guys come in singing
and after a moment
they are joined by the girlfriends as backup

Crazy Kacharsee (track 8 from Shouchiki Kina)
sung in Japanese with surtitles in English:

When the sun beams on the mountain
Toward the old man a fresh good morning
The flowers smile, "good morning"
A rooster belatedly cockadoodles
All right, let's dance, you and I
Yes, let's dance, grandmas and grandpas

[and then a solo guy emerges from the group
very seductive
and flirts with Shizuko throughout the song]

A frog in the pond says good day
Startling the old man
The petrified man smiles and says good day
The frog smiles back, "good day"
All right, let's dance, you and I
Yes, let's dance, mommy and daddy

In the field, the old man decides the daikon is tonight's supper
Surely, grandma would be mad
The old man changes his mind
Potatoes and carrots are growing
All right, let's dance, you and I
Yes, let's dance, sister and brother

On his way home, the old man rests
Then a mole comes out and says hello and
What a harvest!
Then the smiling face says, of course, always a great harvest
All right, let's dance, you and I
Yes, let's dance, grandpa and grandma

[and at last Shizuko reluctantly joins in
and finally loses herself a bit in the song and dance]

The moon rises and says good evening,
grandpa and grandma
The neighbor's dog barked good evening, too
A meowing cat smiles, "good evening"
All right, let's dance, you and I
Yes, let's dance, mommy and daddy

[Everyone sings and dances on out.]

9. BIRTH

[Vijay and Shakti come in and meet Doctor 1.]

VIJAY
Excuse me.

DOCTOR 1
Yes?

VIJAY
We're looking for Mrs. Purefoy?

DOCTOR 1
Mrs. Purefoy?

VIJAY
She is having a baby.

DOCTOR 1

Ah, yes,
you'll need to wait here of course.

VIJAY

Right.
OK.

[Aly comes rushing in.]

ALY

Mrs. Purefoy! Is she....
Ah.
Shakti.

SHAKTI

Aly!

ALY

Vijay....

VIJAY

Aly....

SHAKTI

I didn't know you knew Mrs. Purefoy.

ALY

Know her!
Oh, no!

I mean, know her, of course.
As a friend.

SHAKTI

Yes, of course.

ALY [anxiously, to the doctor]

Has she delivered the baby yet?

DOCTOR 1

Not yet.

ALY

Ah, good.

[to Vijay and Shakti]

I was afraid I would be too late!

So.

SHAKTI

So.

VIJAY

So.

DOCTOR 1

Who is the father?

[the three men all look at one another]

ALY

Ah!

The father.

That would be Mr. Purefoy.

DOCTOR 1

And is he here?

ALY

Here.

Well.

I haven't seen him.

Have you seen him?

SHAKTI AND VIJAY

No. No.

ALY

No doubt he is on his way.
No one wants to miss the birth of a baby.
Especially the father.

DOCTOR 1

Of course.

ALY

Babies aren't born every day.

[he looks around at the others]

That is to say,
one's own babies.

Mrs. Purefoy's baby.

DOCTOR 1

Exactly.

ALY

And every baby is a blessing.

DOCTOR 1

Yes, indeed.

ALY

And then, too, in this country, luckily,
a baby's feet aren't bound.

DOCTOR 1

No, that's right.

ALY

So that's a good thing.

[Doctor 1 leaves.]

Of course, we hope it might be a girl
because
let's face it
Asian men have a hard time dating.

[he takes a seat at the kitchen table;
eventually the others join him]

Because I myself am an asian american man
who is fed up with all the caucasian men-hating
that goes on in some sectors of the asian american
male community.

I say SOME.

Not ALL.

I myself think there are many things to admire about caucasian men.

But the reasons for the resentment are quite simple
and rather pathetic.

Asian American men aren't getting laid.

Asian American men feel that
white men have taken away their women.

There are far more asian women
going out with white men
than there are white women going out with asian men.

Check out the personals.

You will find that a majority of them will list as their match:
a white, a hispanic, or a black.

This is conspicuous for leaving out asian.

Some of the ads
will say in bold: NO ASIAN MEN.

Why is this?

Of course the media portrays asian men as asexual nerds

How did the media get this image?

Did they just concoct it out of nowhere?

No.

They got it from us.

Sure... the media can portray the cream of our crop.

That would help us.

But they don't have to.
What industry stifles itself creatively
in order to acquiesce to the demands of the PC police?
Only white hollywood.
So, what is wrong with asian men in comparison to white men?
Of course there are many exceptions but
these are the rules.

Asian men are less handsome than white men.
I'm an american born asian man
with a western standard of beauty.
Maybe if I was born and raised in my native country
I would feel differently.
Just like there are beauties who are comely
in the eye of all beholders
and then there are beauties who are pretty
in the eyes of some beholders.
I'm referring to Denise Richards and Roseanne Arnold, respectively. I'm not saying
all white men
are more handsome than all asian men of course.
There are just more asian Rodney Dangerfields
than white Rodney Dangerfields.

Asian men are short. Yes they are.

Asian men are less muscular.
This is strictly my perspective
but I'll break it down like this:
Very Muscular asian men=5%,
Muscular=10%,
Average Muscularity=35%,
Weak Muscularity = 50%.
Here's the deal on white men:
Very Muscular white men=10%,
Muscular=20%,
Average Muscularity=50%,
Weak Muscularity = 20%.

Asian men have bad personalities.
This is partially true.
More true among newly arrived immigrants
than westernized american born asians.
Some asian guys don't have a sense of humor.
The thing that they laugh about I can never understand.
Why do many asian restaurants treat their customers
in terms of "US" vs. "them"??
I get better treated by whites than I do by asians.

Asian men are less hung.
This is obviously true.
The debate is over how much.
Allow me to recount some experiences.
Growing up, I was unaware of the stereotype
that asian men have small penises.
The first time I became aware of such stereotypes
is when I watched an asian porno movie.
I thought... what is this? This is porn?
It doesn't look anything like american porn.
The guys have clits for dicks.
I even went to the extent
of measuring my penis when erect.
It measures 5.5 inches when fully erect.
In the flaccid state, it doesn't hang at all.
In fact, if I push on it,
my testicles could actually retract completely into my body
(is this a talent?).
In high school, in gym class,
we were doing some leg stretches sitting down.
When I spread my legs,
I mean really spread my legs,
the nylon pants i was wearing
pushed my entire penis and balls inside.
Some of you may ask, why the preoccupation with penis size?
I wanted to know if I was human.
Growing up, I always felt like an alien.
In junior high, as a joke,
a hispanic guy suggested that this chinese girl go out with me.

She replied, "I don't have bad taste".
To asian men: Calm down.
I am your brother.
I want you to succeed.
To asian women:
Could you stop giving us dirty looks
as if you were about to puke?
Does it feel good to belittle us to others?
Lets be friends.
Why conspicuously exclude us?
Why yell to the world: Asian men suck,
I hate all of them!
Could you be more discreet?

[Doctor 3 enters
taking off his mask and rubber gloves,
smiling.]

DOCTOR 3

Mina Purefoy
swollen belly on a bed
groaning to have a child tugged out of her.
One born every second somewhere.
Other dying every second.
Since I fed the birds five minutes.
Three hundred kicked the bucket.
Other three hundred born,
washing the blood off,
all are washed in the blood of the lamb,
bawling maaaaa.
Cityful passing away, other cityful coming,
passing away too:
other coming on, passing on.
Houses, lines of houses, streets, miles of pavements,
piledup bricks, stones.
Changing hands.
This owner, that.
Landlord never dies they say.
Other steps into his shoes when he gets his notice to quit.

They buy the place up with gold
and still they have all the gold.
Swindle in it somewhere.
Piled up in cities,
worn away age after age.
Pyramid in sand.
Built on bread and onions.
Slaves Chinese wall.
Babylon.
Big stones left. Round towers.
Rest rubble, sprawling suburbs, jerrybuilt.
Kerwan's mushroom houses built of breeze.
Shelter, for the night.

The windows of Brown Thomas,
silk mercers, Cascades of ribbons.
Flimsy China silks.
A tilted urn poured from its mouth a flood of bloodhued poplin.
Pincushions.
Gleaming silks, petticoats on slim brass rails,
rays of flat silk stockings.
High voices. Sunwarm silk.
Jingling harnesses.
All for a woman, home and houses,
silkwebs, silver, rich fruits spicy from Jaffa.
Agendath Netaim. Wealth of the world.

Jingling, hoofhuds.
Perfumed bodies, warm, full.
All kissed, yielded:
in deep summer fields, tangled presses grass,
in trickling hallways of tenements,
along sofas, crowded beds.
Jack, love!
Darling!
Kiss me, Reggy!
My boy!
Love!

[Everyone applauds the doctor.]

ALY

Has the baby been born then?

DOCTOR 3

The baby has been born.

It is a boy.

ALY

A son!

May I see him?

DOCTOR 3

Of course.

Come with me.

[They rush out.]

VIJAY

I don't know, Shakti.

I don't think I feel the exhilaration of new life
so much as I feel I am sinking
deeper and deeper into a pit.

10. SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE

BOB

Can you help us here?

VIJAY

Yes, yes, of course,
what's the trouble?

Bob and Esther and Jenny are trying to roll
or carry a bed from one side of the stage to the other.
A man is asleep on the bed
under the covers.

JENNY

We are helping this woman take her husband home.

SHAKTI

Is it OK?

BOB

If it weren't OK

we wouldn't be doing it, would we?

VIJAY

What happened?

ESTHER [near tears]

It's my husband.

We were only married three and a half weeks ago

and from the moment we got married

we just fought and fought

and I can't blame it all on him

I don't know what I did

that made him so angry

and then he began to sleep on the couch in the living room

and we would stay up all night

arguing and arguing

it's all I ever wanted to marry him

and I know it's all he ever wanted, too

but by then

no one could forgive the other

and then after three days of arguing and arguing all night

he just collapsed from exhaustion

and I brought him to the hospital yesterday

and when he finally woke up today

for just a half an hour

he said to me

that's it

you need to get out of the house

go back to your mother's house

we'll settle up later on what's yours and what's mine

and meanwhile

you can take just one precious thing with you
that you need
that you can't live without
and so I decided,
I'm taking him.

VIJAY
Why did you fight?

ESTHER
For no reason I think.
Because, before we got married
I was in the habit of meeting my friends
in the middle of the day for lunch and tea
and he got jealous
of nothing really
he didn't trust me was what it was
Finally he said you think I'm so stupid
I don't know what you're doing every afternoon?
I said:
What am I doing?
He said:
Having tea with your friend Alison?
Right? I said.
And so everyone knows, he said,
Alison can't be having tea with you every afternoon!
Everyone knows you must be doing something else.
What am I doing? I said.
How would I know? he said.
What could you be doing that you have to keep a secret from me?
Nothing! Nothing! I said. That's what I'm doing.
Ah! Is that so?
And when I say shall we see a movie tomorrow night
oh, you have made a dinner date with Niru.
And when I say shall we just have dinner out on Friday night
oh, you have made a date with Mai-Linh.
And when I say maybe we could take off an afternoon
in the middle of the week
you say, what day do you think?

I say Wednesday
oh, you say you have a tea date with Alison!
And you can't break your date?
No, you say, no,
because she needs to talk to me
she is upset about something
and she needs to talk to me
and I am not upset?
I am not upset?
This is so inconsiderate.
I am inconsiderate?
What do you think caused this
if it wasn't that you are inconsiderate?
It's insulting to me.
I don't want to talk about it.
What did I do?
If you don't know what you've done
no one can make it clear to you.
Because you let me go.
When did I let you go?
You let me go to tea with Alison.
You let me go to dinner with Niru.
You let me go all the time.
Because you are completely indifferent!
Am I not supposed to let you have your life?
Of course you are.
Don't I let you have your life?
Yes, you do.
But all the time you know I want you.
I don't know that at all.

And that's when he passed out from exhaustion.

BOB

Careful, Jenny.

Keep the bed going in a straight line.

JENNY

I'm trying, Bob.

BOB

Don't try, Jenny, just do it.

JENNY

Just do it? Just do it?

Is that any way to speak to another person?

BOB

No one gets credit for trying, Jenny.

You only get credit if you make it happen.

JENNY

I'm making it happen, Bob.

If you would notice what I'm doing,

I am getting ready to turn the bed

so it will fit out the door

but it wouldn't occur to you to trust me

that I know what I'm doing.

BOB

Trust you? I should trust you?

Because I'm so stupid

I don't know what you're doing every afternoon?

JENNY

What am I doing?

BOB

Having tea with your friend Leanne?

JENNY

And so?

BOB

And so everyone knows

Leanne can't be having tea with you every afternoon!

Everyone knows you must be doing something else.

JENNY

What am I doing?

BOB

How would I know?

What could you be doing that you have to keep a secret from me?

JENNY

Nothing! Nothing! That's what I'm doing.

BOB

Ah! Is that so?

And when I say shall we see a movie tomorrow night

oh, you have made a dinner date with Rebecca.

And when I say shall we just have dinner out on Friday night

oh, you have made a date with Kamala.

And when I say maybe we could take off an afternoon

in the middle of the week

you say, what day do you think?

I say Wednesday

oh, you say you have a tea date with Leanne!

And you can't break your date?

No, you say, no,

because she needs to talk to me

she is upset about something

and she needs to talk to me

and I am not upset?

I am not upset?

JENNY

This is so inconsiderate.

BOB

I am inconsiderate?

JENNY

What do you think caused this
if it wasn't that you are inconsiderate?
It's insulting to me.
I don't want to talk about it.

BOB

What did I do?

JENNY

If you don't know what you've done
no one can make it clear to you.
Because you let me go.

BOB

When did I let you go?

JENNY

You let me go to tea with Leanne.
You let me go to dinner with Rebecca.
You let me go all the time.
Because you are completely indifferent!

BOB

Am I not supposed to let you have your life?

JENNY

Of course you are.
Don't I let you have your life?

BOB

Yes, you do.

JENNY

But all the time you know I want you.

BOB

I don't know that at all.

THE GUY IN BED WAKES UP

What's happening?

[Bob and Jenny storm out angrily in opposite directions.]

ESTHER

Oh, Giorgio, you're awake.

THE GUY IN BED

What am I doing?

ESTHER

Giorgio, you told me

I could take one precious thing back home with me

one thing I couldn't live without

and so I am taking you home with me.

GIORGIO

Oh, Esther.

I love you.

I love you.

ESTHER

I love you, Giorgio.

GIORGIO

Now I know it's true that you love me.

And we will never argue again.

ESTHER

Or, if we do,

you will always know, nonetheless,

I love you.

GIORGIO

And you will know I love you.

ESTHER

I'll take you home, Giorgio.

[Giorgio gets out of bed
wearing the hospital gown
that is open all the way down the back—
and, of course, he is naked underneath it.]

GIORGIO

I'll take you home, too.

[They leave.]

SHAKTI

We had better put the bed back where it belongs, Vijay.

VIJAY

I'm just sinking lower and lower into the pit,
Shakti.

I don't know where I am
or what I'm doing.

SHAKTI

It's OK, Vijay. You can count on me.

11. SHIZUKO IN THE UNDERWORLD

Music.

Shizuko and her friends enter singing and dancing.

This is the whole scene.

They sing. They dance. They leave dancing.

Is it CBGB?

Shizuko's friends are no longer just amateurs dancing;
by now they are very cutting edge and cool;
they've become a real act.

They are not just wedding guests any longer.
And it isn't that they've become strippers,
but they are terrifically provocative dancers.
This is the underworld.

The music might be something by M.I.A.,
the young London-born Sri Lankan woman
who now does New York Sri Lankan rap
with lyrics like these:

China girl
a little girl
from a town
that's all ya need to know
Lolita was a man eater
Clocked him like a taxi meter
Fuck gold she was platinum digger
Shaking-ass making moves on a mover
She skipped away to the shop
She found she didn't have enough
She clocked him looking right at her
and sucked on a lollipop
China girl grew up to be a big girl
had her sights set on a bigger world
Dial-a-Bride from Sri Lanka
found herself a Yorkshire banker
Need a Visa? Get with a geezer
Need some money?
Paid him with a knees-up
Year later started to ease up
got her own way, shouted out see ya

12. MORALITY

The Hasidic rabbi enters uncertainly.
Perhaps he has come up out of the audience?

RABBI

Excuse me.

If I may take a moment of your time here

I'd like to read a little prayer.

This is a prayer for our neighborhood.

There will be copies of it on the table in the lobby
if you would like to take a copy home with you.

This is the prayer:

Let us Pray

For the Protection of Our City

From the Plague of the Artists

Master of the Universe, have mercy upon us and upon the borders of our village and do not allow the persecution to come inside our home; please remove from upon us the plague of the artists, so that we shall not drown in evil waters, and so that they shall not come to our residence to ruin it.

Please place in the hearts of the homeowners that they should not build, God forbid, for these people, and strengthen their hearts so that they can withstand this difficult test and so that they will not sell for the lure of money.

Please, our Father God of Mercy, have mercy upon our generation that is weak, and remove this difficult test from these people, these immoral antagonists that by their doing will multiply, God forbid, the excruciating tests and the sight of the impurity and immorality that is growing in the world.

And here we live in fear that owing to the encroachment of these individuals upon our community we will not be able to teach our sons and daughters according to the methods of Israel.

Please, our Father of Mercy, for the sake of our fathers and our sages who gave their lives to allow religion to remain upon the lowly American soil, and for the sake of their merit, preserve the residence, do so for your love of those who came from the dust. Please, our Father of Mercy, do not give the aggressor the portion that you have acquired and that you have freed from slavery with your great strength.

And we know also, we know that we have no strength other than our mouths, and if we have brought on a decree from you, please repeal this harsh decree, because we lack strength and may not be able to withstand this difficult test, God forbid.

Thank you.

[he leaves the way he came]

13. VIJAY IN THE UNDERWORLD

[Vijay steps into the room,
stops, turns.

The detective steps in behind him.]

DETECTIVE [gesturing toward the kitchen table]
Sit there.

VIJAY
Officer, you know,
I don't understand how this could have happened.

DETECTIVE
Is that right?

VIJAY

I don't even know what the charges are.

DETECTIVE

You don't.

OK.

Never mind that.

Let's just start with where you were picked up.

VIJAY

At the Skylla and Kharybdis.

DETECTIVE

Which is what?

VIJAY

A nightclub in Astoria.

DETECTIVE

And you told the arresting officer you were doing what?

VIJAY

Well, the point is,

I went out of the house today
to get a flower for my wife.

DETECTIVE

To get a flower for your wife.

VIJAY

Right.

DETECTIVE

You went to the Skylla and Kharybdis
looking for a flower.

VIJAY

I was with a friend.

DETECTIVE

Right. And you were looking for a flower?

VIJAY

My friend said he knew someone there
who would know where to get the flower.

DETECTIVE

Unh-hunh.

Because there were people there
who knew where to get things?

VIJAY

I guess so.

DETECTIVE

And you had been where else?

VIJAY

To the Lotus Eaters?
That's another nightclub in Astoria.

DETECTIVE

Unh-hunh.

Because there were people there
who knew where to get things?

VIJAY

I'm sorry?

DETECTIVE [shuffling through papers]

What else did they know how to get?

Would they know where to get
a home address?

VIJAY

I don't know what that is.

DETECTIVE

You don't know what a home address is?

VIJAY

Sure. I mean, I don't know what you mean.

DETECTIVE

Well, you were in the hospital earlier?

VIJAY

Right.

DETECTIVE

And would that be where there would be patients' records with their home addresses and their birthdates?

VIJAY

I guess so.

DETECTIVE

And these could be used to get a driver's license?

VIJAY

I'm sorry?

DETECTIVE

And a driver's license could be used to acquire additional identity papers?

VIJAY

I don't know.

DETECTIVE

And this would be a way to move people across borders?

VIJAY

I'm sorry?

DETECTIVE

This would be a way to move people
across borders?
Immigrants? Or other people?

VIJAY

I think that would be unethical.

DETECTIVE

What I heard was:
"Ethics are for people who don't want something."

VIJAY

I don't know about that.

DETECTIVE

It seems you don't know about anything.

VIJAY

I know you think it seems bizarre
going from nightclub to nightclub to find a flower
but life itself is strange
not everything fits in to some rational model
of cause-effect cause-effect
and you think you see the relevant bits
but sometimes you don't at all
and I was just trying to do something that would please my wife
because I love her
I just love her
and I miss her
and I'd like to find this flower and take it home to her
we went to Skylla and Kharybdis
and the Lotus Eaters
and maybe that seems peculiar to you
I mean we also went to Calypso's Island
and then we had to pick up this guy from the ground
and call an ambulance
because he fell off the roof at Circe's
and Shakti said we couldn't just leave him there to die

and I agreed
I agreed
because there are things in life you have to take care of
whether it's convenient or not
whether you have something else you're trying to get done
you have some responsibilities as a human being
you can't leave a guy bleeding on the ground
probably you didn't even know
there's a historic house in Astoria
whoever it was,
one of the founding fathers who signed the Declaration
and it used to be his country house
and it still has some acres of grass around it
and a herd of cattle
and we got caught in there and had to run for it
we had to swim across the lake
I never would have found my way back to Queens Boulevard
if Shakti hadn't been with me
this is the kind of time I've had
so maybe I seem a little disoriented to you
but probably you see people like this all the time
in the city
this is how it is sometimes
just getting through the day
for anyone.

[silence]

DETECTIVE

I'm just going to lock you up now
let you cool off
and think about what you've done
then maybe we can talk again.

VIJAY

You're going to lock me up?

DETECTIVE

That's right.

VIJAY
In jail?

DETECTIVE
In jail.

[We hear
track 5 of the Singing Bowls of Tibet,
the Bon-Po Chant

and the criminals come in from all sides,
bringing their cell bars with them
until they have surrounded Vijay in jail,
and the Detective has gone.

CRIMINAL 1
What's your name?

VIJAY
Vijay.

CRIMINAL 1
Vijay.
What are you in for?

VIJAY
I don't know.

[all the criminals look at one another, smile]

CRIMINAL 1
Right.
Neither do I.

But these guys.
Some of these guys are bad guys.
This guy

[gesturing to one of the other cellmates]
you wouldn't believe.
He's a cannibal.

VIJAY
No.

CRIMINAL 1
Yes.
Fucking cannibal.
He ate a guy's arm off.
And do you know why?

VIJAY
No.

CRIMINAL 1
Because the guy wouldn't give him a cigarette.

VIJAY
Oh.
I don't smoke.

CRIMINAL 1
I'm sorry to hear that.

CRIMINAL 2
The main thing is
in here
you won't want to be holding back.
You know what I mean?
A brother wants something.
You have it.
You give it to him.

CRIMINAL 3
You can understand that.

VIJAY
Right.

CRIMINAL 1
Because
here's something amazing you didn't know
these guys you see
have been magically transformed
into swine.

VIJAY
No.

CRIMINAL 1
Yes.
So what you want to remember with guys like these
the most important thing
is not to get on their wrong side
not to disrespect them
not to hold yourself above them in some way
not to pretend you're a better person than you are
not to share
you know what I'm saying?
Or else
what one of these guys might do
is fuck you up the butt
with a broom handle.

VIJAY
Oh.

CRIMINAL 1
And you don't want that.

VIJAY
No.

CRIMINAL 1

So what is it you said
what are you in for?

VIJAY

I went out to try to buy a flower for my wife.

[Silence.]

Then Criminal 1 begins to laugh,
the others all laugh helplessly;
they are having a good time;
they think Vijay is very cool to say a thing like that.]

CRIMINAL 1

OK!

[He gives Vijay a high five.]

Now what you just interrupted
is that Gulammohammed was going to put on a play for all of us.

VIJAY

Oh. Good!

CRIMINAL 1

So you'll want to buy a ticket.

VIJAY

Buy a ticket.

CRIMINAL 1

We all of us bought tickets!

VIJAY

But I had all my money taken away from me
when I came into the jail
and my watch.
I don't think I have anything.

CRIMINAL 1
That's crazy.

VIJAY
I know.
But that's how it is.

CRIMINAL 1
But somehow they still left you with your shoes.

VIJAY
My shoes.

CRIMINAL 2
And his shirt.

CRIMINAL 3
His shirt.

CRIMINAL 2
And his pants.

CRIMINAL 3
And his pants.

CRIMINAL 1
I think we can help you with those.

VIJAY
Right.

[they help him take off everything,
down to a pair of bright red silk boxers]

CRIMINAL 3
Nice boxers.
Very nice.

CRIMINAL 1

You want his boxers?

CRIMINAL 2

I don't think I'm going to be wearing a pair of red silk boxers.

CRIMINAL 3

Right.

You can keep the boxers.

VIJAY

Thanks.

CRIMINAL 2

OK.

Here is the story of Shakuntala and King Dushyanta.

VIJAY

I know this story.

CRIMINAL 2

Everyone knows this story.

But they forget.

VIJAY

Right.

[Criminal 2 tells this story with the use of a story box of the sort made by the artist Gulammohammed Sheikh: a wooden box with a metal handle, like a drawer handle, on top, out of which fold four hinged panels, each of the panels hinged in turn, leaving doors inside the box that also open up. So that as many as 28 panels are available for pictures. In this way, as the story is told, characters suddenly appear as a panel is folded out, and disappear, and secrets are revealed.]

CRIMINAL 2

The sage Vishwamitra
and the celestial maiden Menaka
had a daughter.

And no sooner was she born
than Menaka abandoned her in the forest.
There she was found by the Sage Kanva
and raised as though she were his own daughter.

[he reveals the picture of Kanva, and speaks for him]

"I shall adopt the baby-girl
and call her Shakuntula."

The girl grew up and made friends with the animals around her

[he shows the picture]

and made good friends
with other young women in the village

[picture of young women]

"Priyamvada, you are always teasing me."

"You are always busy, Shakuntula.
Let us have some fun."

One day, young King Dushyant came to the forest to hunt.

[picture]

"Look, there is a fine stag just ahead of us!"

"We will go like the wind and hunt it down."

But some young men in the forest stopped the king,
telling him that the stag he hunted
was a fawn belonging to the sage Kanva.

The king went to pay his respects to Kanva,
and then he saw Shakuntula with her friends.

[picture]

He fell in love with her at once
and soon
he married her
giving his own ring to her
and exchanging garlands in the woods.

[picture]

Then, just three days later,
he was called back to his palace
to conduct some urgent business.

"Don't worry, Shakuntula,
I will send my ministers
to bring you to the palace."

Shakuntula was heartbroken
to be away from her love
even for a moment.

So that,
when sage Durvasa
came to call upon sage Kanva,
Shakuntula was too lost in thought
to bid him a proper welcome.

[picture]

And so
sage Durvasa became angry
and placed a curse on Shakuntula.

[picture]

"You have forgotten your duty to a guest,
and so,
the person you are thinking of
will also forget you."

[picture]

Stunned, her friends begged the angry sage
to take back his curse.
And he said

"I cannot take it back,
but I can change it a little bit."

And so he said,

"the person will remember Shakuntula
when he sees an object he has given her."

Of course, Shakuntula remembered the ring
the king had given her
and so,
accompanied by her friends,
she set out for the palace of the king.

But then, at the River Ganga
where they stopped to bathe and offer prayers,
Shakuntula's ring fell into the water
and was gone.

[picture]

Still, the travellers went on to the palace
and her friends presented her to the king, saying

"Here is Shakuntula, your wife,
who will soon be a mother."

But, of course, the king didn't remember her
and told them all to leave.

[picture]

Suddenly there was a bright light in the sky.
Shakuntula's mother appeared.
And took Shakuntula with her up into the clouds.

[picture]

Meanwhile, in the market,
a man was arrested
for trying to sell
the king's own gold ring.

Brought before the king
he was asked where he had found the ring
and he told the truth:
that he had found it in the belly
of a fish that he had caught that day.

He put the ring into the hand of the king.

At once the king called to his ministers:

"Where is my wife Shakuntula?
Who will bring my beloved back to me?"

No one could find her.
they told the king
she had been carried off to heaven by a nymph.

Some years had passed.
And then one day
the God Indra sent a messenger
asking for King Dushyant's help in a war against the demons.

The king fought with the gods
and soon the war was won.

Dushyant came back to earth in Indra's flying chariot.
And, as he passed over the countryside,
he a beautiful child below.

He asked for the chariot to be brought to earth
so that he could see the child
and speak to him.

And as he was speaking to the child,
the boy's mother came out from behind the trees.

Shakuntula.

VIJAY
Oh, God!
Oh, God!
Don't tell me!
They were apart all that time
and they found one another again.
Oh, God!
What have I done,
leaving Shizuko all this time.

Shizuko, I'm coming home!

[At once
a thousand flowers rain down from heaven.

The criminals take their jail cells and disappear.

He scoops up an armful of the flowers of heaven
and goes home.]

14. THE BLISSFUL COUPLE

VIJAY
Shizuko!
Where are you?

SHIZUKO [entering]
Vijay?
Where were you?

VIJAY
I went to get the flower of heaven for you.

SHIZUKO
Oh, Vijay,
I have a gift for you, too.

[she gives him a flower of heaven]

I looked everywhere for you.

VIJAY
I looked everywhere for you.

And this is just the beginning of looking for one another.

[The Wedding dance
with music
at full volume.

From the great Okinawan pop star,
full-on kitchy music,
The Best of Shoukichi Kina, peppermint tea house, track 2,
Hana No Kajimaya.

The women of the bridal party enter singing and dancing:

Children of the sun are dancing
With flower pinwheels in their hands

Chituntutentun chituntuten
tuttuntutenten chituntu

Children of the sun are singing
Swinging and dancing in the wind
Chituntutentun chituntuten
tuttuntutenten chituntu

Children of the sun are smiling
Even in the rain, even in the wind
Chituntutentun chituntuten
tuttuntutenten chituntu

Children of the sun are laughing
Even when shedding tears in deep sorrow
Chituntutentun chituntuten
tuttuntutenten chituntu

Children of the sun are going
Wherever the wind and clouds are flowing
Chituntutentun chituntuten
tuttuntutenten chituntu

And then, at the end of that,
the men enter singing and dancing with Kina's track 10
Haisai Ojisan
[or it could be they sing something Indian,
equally macho and energetic]:

Hey, man! Hey, man!
If there's a drop of sake left in last night's little bottle
Won't you give me some?
Hey, boy! Hey, boy!
You think I'm satisfied with a little bottle?
Don't say there's none left
OK, man! If the little bottle's not enough, give me a big one.

[and then the men and women sing and dance together.]

Hi, man! Hi, man!
I wanna marry, I'm not a kid any more
Can I marry your daughter?
Hey, boy! Hey, boy!
Marry? No kidding!
You're still too young to talk about such things.
OK, man! I'll wait till my hair turns white.

Hi, man! Hi, man!
What a big bald spot you have!
Hey, boy! Hey, boy!
Bald men are excellent.
My forefathers were really excellent.
OK, man! I'm gonna have cosmetic surgery to add bald spots.

[A big noisy party.]

Hi, man! Hi, man!
Your beard is funny, like the whiskers of an attic mouse.
Hey, boy! Hey, boy!
Laugh at my beard, but women love bearded men.
OK, man! I don't wanna be outdone by you.
Starting tomorrow, I'll grow a beard that looks like
the whiskers of a mouse.

Hi, man! Hi, man!
Last night's hooker was really pretty,
you should go there, too!
Hey, boy! Hey, boy!
In Chiji, Nakajima and Watanji, I'm a big shot.
OK, man! Going around here and there,
I'm wasting my money.
You're wasting your money.

[And finally everyone dances out
and leaves the newlyweds alone
in the pose of the Blissful Couple:
he stands facing the audience,

she has her legs wrapped around his waist
and they are kissing forever.]

A NOTE ON SOURCES:

Queens Boulevard was inspired by the Katha-Kali play *The Flower of Good Fortune* by Kottayan Tampuran, and, working with the dramaturgical collaboration of Tom Damrauer, the piece incorporates texts also from Homer, James Joyce, Ono No Komachi, Yusun Kwon, Valerie Solanus, Dolat H. Doongaji and A. K. Lavangia, M...@netexecutive.com, and multiple other internet blogs from the neighborhoods of Queens.

"Cultural Collage: If the intercultural theatre claims to be concerned with the cultural identities of the forms it utilizes...certain artists, like Robert Wilson...cite, adapt, reduce, enlarge, combine, and mix various elements without concern for a scale of importance or value. The intercultural becomes the unexpected and quasi-surrealist encounter of cultural debris or—more positively—of cultural material that has been repressed or discredited...." —Patrice Pavis

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