

BLUE SKY THINKING

- The Plays -

by

Eliza Wyatt

This play was first produced by The Roxbury Outreach Shakespeare Experience, December 1992, directed by Decima Francis, with:

PAULA and PAULINE played by Wendy Bivens
MARIBEN and MARILYN played by Amy Barros
ZINA and LEILA played by Lezlie Whitehouse
ARI and HARAJ played by Jomo Irvin Ray
JOHN and DON played by Chris Coffey
BURT and STAGE-MANAGER played by Kamau Hashim

The staging in Cambridge was particularly effective, with the stage-manager's table and coffee stand at audience level, the phys-end scenes and the restaurant scenes below the stage, and the actors climbing the stairs to the main stage's two playing areas, i.e. the hotel bedroom and the women's apartment.

Set

A stage or rehearsal hall in a large city

Time

The present

BLUE SKY THINKING**ACT ONE**

*AT RISE, HARAJ enters, followed by LEILA.
They deposit scripts on stage manager's table.*

HARAJ I'd like you read a play of mine. One I wrote.

LEILA I don't think I can right now.

HARAJ This is an honor in my opinion.

LEILA I appreciate that.

HARAJ I think you'll understand because you're from the Middle East. You will know what I'm talking about.

LEILA But you're not Egyptian.

HARAJ I come from Nazareth. But we belong to the same cultural background.

LEILA I don't agree. You're not a Moslem. I don't consider myself a Moslem now, but I was born and brought up like one.

HARAJ So my parents were Christian, but I was born and lived in the Middle East.

LEILA I don't think I can.

HARAJ You can't even read the play?

LEILA I don't think I can relate to it.

HARAJ Why not?

LEILA Because you're a man and I'm a woman.

(They exit)

(MARILYN enters and crosses PAULINE)

MARILYN The trick will be to hold their interest in the kind of people they don't meet everyday. With problems your average audience member knows nothing about.

PAULINE They soon will.

MARILYN Because they happen so far away.

PAULINE They're in my bedroom, on my TV.

MARILYN Only when you turn it on.

PAULINE You've got to. You have, Marilyn, even you. Wake up, you're in the world.

MARILYN Not if I don't want to be.

PAULINE Why wouldn't you? For all the trash, where else is there?

MARILYN Don't press me, I might tell you.

PAULINE Don't tell me, take me.

MARILYN You want to leave too?

PAULINE I want to live here and leave here, every single day. The tension is killing me.

MARILYN You too.

PAULINE There's no escape!

MARILYN I try to escape, but I can't.

PAULINE There's no other place. There's no other people. This is it. This is the play.

MARILYN There are other people, other plays.

PAULINE Not for us! However much we...

MARILYN ...might wish we were more intellectual...

PAULINE ...poetic

MARILYN ...brilliant, different.

PAULINE But we're not on TV!

MARILYN I used to have a dreambar radio and every morning I'd wake up to this voice, that 'nasty surprise and I'm going to tell you about it' forcing my attention to his every syllable formed by his lips! As if he was going to tell me about the end of the world, and you know what? He was, that's what he wanted to tell me, that's

what he'd love to spit out, to be the one, to have the POWER!

PAULINE *(Humming dangerously)* THIS IS NOT A WARNING SIGNAL. THIS IS THE END OF HISTORY. It's his ego trip.

MARILYN I can't let him have it, not any more.

PAULINE Do what I do, wake up and go jogging.

(DON enters)

DON What are we doing today? Two plays! Two for the price of one. Fasten your seatbelts. We're going to have some fun.

PAULINE You are, you're not playing yourself!

DON No, that's not in my contract.

PAULINE Smart!

MARILYN How long do we have you?

DON I'm here now, and unless I hear from my agent I'll be here until the morning.

PAULINE Seriously!

DON I never walk out on a show. Not often!

(BURT enters)

BURT How are the loves of my life? They are, they just won't take me seriously. They think I want kinky sex when I really want to worship the ground they walk on.

PAULINE Are we all here?

MARILYN Why don't you start?

PAULINE We're supposed to be together to hear this.

MARILYN They were here earlier, I saw them.

DON Let's get on!

(While this next segment occurs, PAULINE and ZINA are preparing their living-room space.)

(DON reads a statement which will probably go into the program for the two one-acts these actors are about to perform. He reads it to set the mood and start the proceedings.)

DON The continent of America, both north and south, used to be covered with giant forests before the Europeans landed. Miles out from our eastern shores, sailors could smell the heavy scent of the cedars. Down south there were mahogany, rosewood, pine trees. Europe, at the time of the Roman invasion, was covered with firs, elms, sycamores, beech and ash trees, which were gradually felled to make furniture, boats and paper. Lord Byron felled acres to pay his tailor. We don't know the vegetation that used to exist in the Middle East, but we can trace the origins there of our fruit trees, apples, pears, peach, apricot, cherry and olive. Most of our desserts were made by hand. Human hands collecting twigs, branches, trees for fires and light in the night.

BURT I guess this was before television.

(LEILA and HARAJ enter - eating)

LEILA Sorry we're late, but you don't seem to have got very far.

PAULINE We couldn't without you.

LEILA Souvlaki called, but it's too greasy.

MARILYN How can you eat before you spill your guts out?

LEILA Not my guts, the character's.

DON Oh, yours too. I've tripped over them.

LEILA Don't mind showing people what I've got. Doesn't mean I need that much emotion.

BURT *(Referring to an audition notice he's handed MARILYN)* What do you think? It's a job.

MARILYN You have to apply in writing.

BURT Oh no, I didn't read the fine print. I never fill out forms. Took a vow and kept it, no more filling out of forms. I tell people I'm illiterate.

DON Let's get ON!

PAULINE Okay, Don has somewhere he has to go after this. Let's party.

(DON, BURT, HARAJ and MARILYN sit out. We see PAULINE and ZINA, in denim shorts and sneakers, exercising in their living room to music.)

PAULINE So many men, so little time... so many men.

ZINA Thirty, thirty-five, forty, forty-five, fifty.

PAULINE If I had all the time in the world, I'd never have enough men, men, men.

ZINA Fifty-five, sixty, sixty-five, seventy... I can't. Stop, I can't do any more.

PAULINE One last time, ninety, ninety-five...

ZINA Let's sit down. I've got to sit...

PAULINE Okay, we'll do leg stretches.

ZINA Leg stretches? *(She tries them.)* I was always told to keep my legs together.

PAULINE I used to be told to button my mouth up.

ZINA Not to talk? That's funny. But you have to talk here. The first thing I learned when I came was that if you say nothing, they think you're stupid.

PAULINE Or that you can't speak English.

ZINA Like someone stupid!

(Lights fade on their space and go up on ARI, trying to wake MARILYN in their Boston hotel room.)

ARI It's morning, wake up.

MARILYN *(Consulting her watch)* We've only been sleep an hour.

ARI That time's wrong now.

MARILYN Where we came from it's still yesterday.

ARI *(Giving her tray)* No it isn't. You never get the time and figures correct.

MARILYN I want to go back to sleep.

ARI Go back later. I've ordered you breakfast. Cereal. Don't say I never spoil you. Do you think I have to wear a tie? Wake up and look at my tie. What do you think? I look terrible in a tie. I won't wear one. I don't have to dress like them. It's only a conference.

MARILYN What's the matter with the milk?

ARI I noticed that.

MARILYN Tastes like water.

ARI Trying to make it go further. There's a budget deficit in this country.

MARILYN Really? But that shouldn't affect the milk.

ARI I tried to have a bath, but there are no taps working. Trying to save on water.

MARILYN Yeah, to put in the milk. No bath? Call the front desk and complain.

ARI Can you?

MARILYN I'm half-asleep.

ARI Can you, please?

MARILYN I'm sorry I changed my watch, now I won't know whether I'm really hungry or whether my stomach's churning with anxiety.

ARI About what? You don't have to do anything except read in bed, or go for a walk.

MARILYN That's it?

ARI And call your mother.

MARILYN That won't take long, no one knows where she is.

ARI Hasn't someone told her you're coming?

MARILYN No one knows where she is. She's lost.

ARI How can you lose your mother?

MARILYN Last heard of in Oklahoma. Or was it Arizona?

ARI I think you ought to find her. I must go, I'm late for my appointment.

MARILYN I thought this was a conference.

ARI But the meetings are before the meetings.

MARILYN Impress them!

ARI Promise!

ARI *(Also as HARAJ, the actor)* What's the story with your mother?

MARILYN *(Fading out of her play and beginning to speak to the others and the audience, doing a character study on her own mother.)* It's like this. She smokes, drinks, gambles with her feelings, looks for diamonds on the soles of men's feet and never finds any. Spends serious time in motel rooms and Chinese restaurants. Wanders around the country, working in coffee shops.

ARI That tells me nothing.

MARILYN It's not easy writing about your own mother.

ARI I can imagine. I love her, but she's always too boring at home. Hey, like my character's mother. We're typecast.

MARILYN Actors usually are. Only don't call Leila Zina.

LEILA We're not a... how do you say... conglomeration... of our national

characteristics. We're not simply a conglomeration. I'm not your usual Egyptian, and not at all like the character I play. Not at all! Growing up I had lots of freedom, and a truly wonderful father. I have dogs, I don't even mind when they piss on my carpet. I was one of the first woman directors in Egypt.

BURT *(Approaching LEILA)* What is this? True confession week? *(To cast in general)* Anyone want to know about me?

MARILYN Sure, I'd like to know about you.

BURT Before I was a cop and I'm not a cop any more I'm retired, as you know, before that I was a teacher. Yeah, not many people know that about me. I was a teacher in grade school. All the subjects, eh? I was educated. But I wasn't allowed to teach them the way I was taught. Couldn't discipline the punks, oh no, they're old enough to do drugs and vandalize buildings but not old enough to take their punishment. They thought I was in the wrong, losing my temper with them. They told me to leave and the police department offered me a job.

DON Why have we stopped?

MARILYN Let's get on, Don has somewhere important to be.

DON Yeah, like home.

BURT What's the story here? I mean my scene's coming up and I don't know much about it. What's the time of day here? *(He asks PAULINE, who is preparing her space for the basketball practice of the team she coaches.)*

PAULINE Evening.

BURT What time of year?

PAULINE May. An evening in May, just after the last war.

BURT Which war?

PAULINE Whichever was the last war.

BURT Okay, fire away..

(We see PAULINE at her team's last basketball practice)

PAULINE Defense! Defense! Pass, pass! Out Jody, out. Do I always have to repeat myself? I said, do I always have to repeat myself? Okay, I quit. Same time tomorrow.

BURT *(Jogs up alongside)* They're not doing half bad, not half bad.

PAULINE They could be a whole lot better.

BURT They're improving.

PAULINE They need the practice.

BURT They're good.

PAULINE They need TOURING practice.

BURT They're not a road band. They don't get paid to go touring.

PAULINE Did you put in a request?

BURT You think it would do any good to put in a request?

PAULINE Do it anyway.

BURT What am I, a roving bandleader?

PAULINE We need the practice.

BURT A fuckin' conductor?

(PAULINE exits in disgust)

(ARI beckons DON into their hotel bedroom)

ARI Come in, come in and you can give it to her yourself.

DON Is she here?

ARI Mariben? Mariben? Her real name's Marilyn.

DON Oh, we have that name here too. I don't want her to think it's a personal gift.

ARI No, she won't. Don't worry.

DON All the women get them. Boston baked beans. Except they're not baked yet. The crock is to bake them in, and there's a recipe. Rather neat.

ARI Rather neat. She must have stepped out.

DON No problem. I'll meet her some other time.

(DON exits, ARI sits on bed.)

(PAULINE is massaging her feet. ZINA enters, dressed ready to date.)

PAULINE Going out again are we?

ZINA What are you going to do?

PAULINE Go to bed with a good book. Like a good girl.

ZINA I've finished mine, you can borrow it.

PAULINE Thanks! Has he asked you yet?

ZINA This weekend. We're going to this town he's from in New Hampshire.

PAULINE Figures! Plaid shirts, New Hampshire.

ZINA So I think when we stay over...

PAULINE You sleep together. Reasonable assumption. But wait a minute, for the first time in his parents' house?

ZINA No, we're staying at the Inn on the way up there.

PAULINE That's where he'll ask the question. Your bed or mine.

ZINA I'm nervous.

PAULINE Drink a lot of wine.

ZINA Then I have to meet his parents.

PAULINE They have to meet you, too. Sounds like a final, both exams in one day.

ZINA He says this is the town he want to die in. He wants to die in this town. IS that an expression?

PAULINE Either he's got some fatal disease or he's going to be terrific in bed. It means he sees his future ahead of him; he sounds serious.

ZINA He is, too serious.

PAULINE Do you mean TOO serious, or VERY serious?

ZINA Which is better? Then that's John! But I might not like his town. He says it is not much bigger than a village.

PAULINE So what, you're from a village?

ZINA A different kind.

PAULINE Same the world over, births, marriages and deaths. Same goes for the cities, only quicker.

ZINA Can we give you a ride into town? Then read that book by Nawal El Saadawi. She writes a good story.

PAULINE *(picking up book)* What's it about?

ZINA A woman of the street in Cairo. *(Breaking out of character and space)* Should I say all that? Or just it's title, WOMAN AT ZERO POINT?

PAULINE Why not both?

LEILA I don't want it to sound phony.

PAULINE It's a book, you're telling me about it.

MARILYN (*Approaching their space*) While we're breaking, is that the only book by Saadawi worth mentioning? Isn't there one called THE HIDDEN FACE OF EVE?

LEILA WOMAN AT POINT ZERO says it all. What's wrong?

MARILYN We don't want it to sound like we're trying to cover every form of female degradation in this one play.

PAULINE We're not, we're making no reference to cheerleading. A play about clitoridectomy is hardly going to be fun. Unless it's a comedy.

MARILYN We don't want to keep making statements.

PAULINE Some of us do. Leave our play alone, and get on with your seduction scene.

MARILYN This is a play, not politics.

LEILA I disagree.

MARILYN I'm always outnumbered.

PAULINE Let's get on with it.

(ARI is alone in his hotel room. MARILYN enters with packages.)

ARI What have you been buying?

MARILYN Your sister gave me money to buy denim in fancy colors. I promised to make her a skirt.

ARI Don't take any notice of her. She'd ask for glass stars if they made them.

MARILYN In Chinatown they probably do. That's where I found the fabric store. Around the hotel there's nothing but restaurants, Korean and Vietnamese.

ARI They call it the Combat Zone.

MARILYN And sex shops.

ARI I hope you didn't go into one. Oh no, someone might have seen you.

MARILYN (Kissing him) I wanted to see if there was anything new we didn't know about. Don't think so.

ARI I had an interview with Genzym, and this afternoon I'm going to interview Genetec.

MARILYN They all want you?

ARI I wrote and asked for an interview. Sent them a stamped addressed envelope, with American stamps. How about that?

MARILYN I always suspected you had some cleverness in you...

ARI Biogen is the one really interested in me.

MARILYN And determination!

ARI I want to get a job here.

MARILYN Even if I don't want you to.

ARI You've no idea what we're missing in the technology. I can't do the best work I can without the computers. Otherwise I may as well chop wood. I need to work with these people. Or I'll chop wood. You must prefer to live in your own country.

MARILYN I don't.

ARI I don't understand that. You're being stubborn. (*Showing her brochure*) Look at the future. this is the future, for all of us. They're growing these incredible miniature cows, which only stand so high.

MARILYN What for? Are people going to keep them as pets?

ARI I think they will offer me the job.

MARILYN They want to keep you as a pet.

ARI We'd be able to afford a house somewhere in the suburbs.

MARILYN Oh no, please, not the suburbs.

ARI They can be green and lovely in the summer time. Some way down the road we'll be having a family.

MARILYN You'll go off to the lab and leave me day and night in a Boston suburb? With babies? And strangers?

ARI Isn't that the usual thing to do?

MARILYN You're selling your soul for a Cray Computer.

ARI Doesn't have to be a Cray. IBM will do, my soul comes cheap.

MARILYN That's an insult to the person who married you.

(She leaves ARI on the bed, turning back to him, as she gradually leaves the scene)

MARILYN *(To HARAJ)* What are you smiling, at like Buddha? Like a young prince, who's going out of his way to be seduced; or do I mean, royally screwed?

LEILA Why don't you say which country Ari's from?

PAULINE Make your mind up, and say.

MARILYN We don't want to.

HARAJ Used to bother me, now I don't mind.

MARILYN I like not being specific.

LEILA Doesn't it make a difference to you, though? You want to go there. You want to go back.

MARILYN I want to return to that way of life, the family, the village, could be anywhere outside America.

BURT We have those things here too, you know.

MARILYN It's the story that's important. *(Growing more anxious in her defense)* We don't want the audience to worry about where..

The story will have a broader appeal if it could be anywhere in the world.

LEILA I don't think so.

PAULINE She's talking about the 'art' world.

DON Are you ganging up on Marilyn?

MARILYN It's Okay, I can fight my own battles.

DON Excuse me...

MARILYN Where they come from doesn't matter once they're here in America. The story is about the problems Marilyn and Ari face. And will face every day of their married life. Like I used to...

LEILA But aren't you proud of where Ari came from?

MARILYN That's not the point!

DON From a practical point of view it's better not to be here too specific because then we can cast the play with whoever's available, ethnically. As long as Marilyn and Ari look alike they could come from the same country, we can cast the play multi- racially. Ari could come from any country between Morocco and Afghanistan, including the Sudan and Ethiopia, however we define the Middle-East these days.

HARAJ Maybe he come from America. Some ethnic hole in America.

PAULINE You can't say 'ethnic hole'. We don't say that.

LEILA They say ghetto!

MARILYN We don't! But if you think that you're not listening to the story. The story doesn't hold up if Ari comes from the States. Have you read the play?

ARI I'm in it.

MARILYN Have you read it?

BURT We know where he's from, Nazareth.

HARAJ I am, yes. And proud of it.

BURT I've read both plays, and I'd like to suggest something for your play. When you and Marilyn are talking, I think I should be there in the background as the plumber.

HARAJ No, we want the audience to listen to what we're saying.

BURT But you don't have water.

HARAJ Are you upset that you don't have such a big part?

BURT *(Running into scene to act out the part as plumber)* Now that you mention it yes, but I'm trying to imagine the reality of the situation and I do see myself there. Making an attempt to fix the taps, perhaps realizing I need a wrench and then exiting to get it. You know how plumbers come and go getting on your nerves.

HARAJ Exactly, yes. But the principals, us, are talking! Did you know I've written a play?

MARILYN No...

LEILA Not now!

HARAJ You don't want to read it, but they might.

MARILYN Why, what's it about?

PAULINE We really don't have time.

HARAJ As you know, I'm a Nazarine from a large professor's family. In the garden of our rather fine house, stood a beautiful fig tree. One cold winter's morning we woke up and discovered it had been cut down. While we were asleep someone came and cut it down. You may think this is a familiar story to literature, but it actually

happened to me and my family. Surely that counts for something.

DON Does anyone want to hear about my childhood?

ALL TOGETHER NOOO!

MARILYN But what's the play?

ARI Ah, the play's something different. I'm just telling you my background.

PAULINE We're wasting time!

ARI I don't think so.

MARILYN Okay, let's get back to the hotel room. Where are we? I'm going home, to my aunt's house. To look up remaining family relatives.

(MARILYN returns to scene with ARI)

ARI Why go? Who will you see if your mother's not there?

MARILYN The rest of the bunch.

ARI Who will you stay with?

MARILYN Aunt Jane! You're busy at the conference. I might as well. I've nothing else to do. I left a message on Aunt Jane's answering machine. Everyone's got them now.

ARI Very convenient.

MARILYN Except my mother.

ARI Do you want me to walk you to the station?

MARILYN No you have a Symposium.

ARI I'll walk you.

MARILYN I can go alone. After all, I'm home. I can't wait to see the sunset behind the Sunoco Gas Sign. *(Out of character)* It's strange the things you remember, but they don't always mean anything.

HARAJ Is that in the play, or not? What you just said.

MARILYN No, it was a comment.

HARAJ Unless you tell me what's a comment and what isn't, how am I going to tell?

MARILYN I'm acting the script. The comment's real.

PAULINE She's improvising. We'll decide whether we want to write it in later.

HARAJ You're crazy. You shouldn't act in your own play.

MARILYN I have to.

LEILA Where's Don, this is our big scene?

BURT I think he's making a phone call.

LEILA That's not fair. He gets so many chances to act. Now it's my scene..

(DON enters)

DON Make that OUR scene.

LEILA I was about to do it alone.

(ZINA and JOHN in a restaurant)

JOHN Are you sure you want the fish?

ZINA Yes. It'll be fine.

JOHN If you don't like the potatoes, we can order rice pilaf.

ZINA Potatoes will be fine. This is a nice quiet place.

JOHN Slows you down, slows you right down.

ZINA Your parents are very nice people.

JOHN They like you a lot too, which makes me even more sorry..

ZINA I'm sorry too.

JOHN I'll never ever ever forget this.

ZINA No, or me. I'm an unusual person with an unusual problem. At least, in this country. I don't want to talk about it any more.

JOHN Okay! Which fish did we order? Trout, I think. You'll like that.

ZINA (*Looking around the restaurant*) It's a nice place to die in.

JOHN Don't say that, it sounds terrible. Full of double, treble meanings, don't even think that. I can't think that now.

ZINA Okay!

JOHN Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!

ZINA I like you are being honest about me, and the problem. That is good.

JOHN We shouldn't have come up here, we should have gone to the beach or the Caribbean. Some neutral territory.

ZINA Would it have made a difference?

JOHN I don't know.

LEILA (*Breaking scene*) I don't like my character. There's nothing to like about her. She's in the play for a reason, because she's had a clitoridectomy and she serves that reason, which is why I'm playing her because I want to broadcast the fact. You know that. But it doesn't mean I like Zina. I think she's a twit. Or is it a twat? Anyway I think of her more like a servant than a nurse. Why isn't there a play about real heroines, like Madam Sadat or Saadawi herself?

PAULINE Are there any plays about them?

LEILA No, we have to write them. There are very few parts for women with Egyptian accents but no one seems to care.

PAULINE We have to write from our own experience, somewhat related to our own experience.

LEILA But I've personally known heroines.

PAULINE Then write about them.

LEILA I don't know if I want to write.

PAULINE Okay, ZINA has just told PAULINE about the disastrous weekend. And the juices are flowing. The sympathy's flowing between them.

PAULINE So you're in bed and... then what did the bastard say?

ZINA Nothing.

PAULINE What did he do?

ZINA Nothing.

PAULINE But he knew before you went.

ZINA I told him, yes. But he didn't really understand. He thought it was a little slash they do when you're a baby in hospital.

PAULINE And?

ZINA I don't have to tell you again.

PAULINE So he took one look and said, I'm not going to marry you. Just like that?

ZINA No, but I got the message as you say...

PAULINE I don't believe that guy!

ZINA He said, he want time to think about us, or me, and it.

LEILA *(Breaking character, but not completely, she speaks extemporaneously to the action but this is an old tirade)* Let him think about it, let the UN think about it. When is it going to stop? Clitoridectomy is a reality for so many women and not only in Egypt, more so in Yemen and the Sudan,

Mali, parts of Africa, when are we going to stop thinking about it and do something? *(covering her character)* That's how I think on the inside.

PAULINE *(Shouting past LEILA's interruption)* He's an insufferable bigoted pig.

ZINA *(Running back to her scene)* He's not. He's very nice. I love him. *(breaking out again)* Did I say thirty million women are affected?

PAULINE *(Angry at LEILA and at ZINA)* We're doing a play here, you can't keep breaking the action.

LEILA I'd like it to be a documentary really.

PAULINE Where are we? Where are we?

ZINA *(Picking up the action)* He says he thought he was prepared but when we were together, he wasn't.

PAULINE He knew, he's a doctor. Doesn't he have any imagination?

ZINA He said we shouldn't have gone to his hometown, that it would have been better to away somewhere. To the beach, he said. I wonder why that, the beach.

PAULINE He's a jerk.

ZINA No, he isn't.

PAULINE He is. How can you not be angry?

ZINA Why are you so angry?

PAULINE I'm angry for you, because you're not. You seem to understand him, but I don't. He should have thought of all this before he led you to expect the earth.

ZINA I didn't expect that much.

PAULINE Why not? You deserve it. Don't be so goddamn understanding.

BURT *(Crossing on cue, but making an error)* What's eating you?

PAULINE Not here, Burt.

BURT *(Withdrawing)* Sorry, fits in. Sorry.

PAULINE What are you going to do?

ZINA I can't force him. I can't even call him. Okay, I can call him. If I want to.

PAULINE Call him.

ZINA No. He'll have to call me.

PAULINE What are you doing with that book?

ZINA I'm reading Saadawi because she had it too. The same as me, in the same awful fashion. I mean, in the same way.

PAULINE Saadawi had it done?

ZINA She does politics against it. *(Breaking out)* Like I want to. *(Covering again)* If I wasn't a nurse.

PAULINE *(Still angry)* Oh, we are breaking now? Now that you've riled me. After hearing about this, America looks pretty good to me. Perhaps when I travel to Europe next time I won't tell them I'm from Africa.

LEILA *(Unable to be humbler ZINA again)* I don't understand why in my country, the government and the educated people don't do something. They are, but not enough. Not quickly enough. No one wants to talk about it. But even so we're doing better than Mali and the Sudan. I think Egypt should go on record as trying to improve things.

PAULINE *(Pointedly, bringing LEILA back to character)* Zina doesn't like to talk about it does she?

ZINA No, but with Don talking about it did not help.

PAULINE *(Back in the scene)* But you explained to him how it happened, how your mother woke you in the middle of the night and dragged you from your bed?

ZINA I should have lied.

PAULINE Why?

ZINA Because now he feels he can never like my mother. Can't meet her.

PAULINE What about your feelings, your pain?

ZINA Words are sometimes useless. *(Sighs)* I hate saying that.

PAULINE *(Breaking character)* That's what she thought.

LEILA You're not making a really strong statement.

PAULINE She was my friend. She was like that.

LEILA That's no excuse. In the play she's a representative...

HARAJ I'm from the Middle-East, and I never knew about any of this. Before this play, I'm grateful to be told.

DON It has to be said, yes.

PAULINE But in the confines of the script.

DON That would make more of an emotional point.

LEILA That's art, yes, to present me as a victim. In actual fact I was not a victim. In actual fact I was the first person in Egypt to film a clitoridectomy. There have been others since, but I was the first. I showed it to American audiences, and made them sit through it from beginning to end. She was a six year old village girl and it was done with an unsterilized razor. For six minutes the midwife cut away and the girl screamed.

BURT Excuse me, but I really don't want to hear this. I've heard it. I lived my whole life without knowing what a cliter... meant and I don't want to now. I mean I do now, and I'm glad we're doing this

play. But don't make us go through it again and again.

LEILA *(Unconcerned with BURT's interruption)*
How were you allowed to film such a thing, I was asked. How did the religious family tolerate that intrusion? Being such devout Moslems, and ignorant peasants, even a photograph upsets them. The reason is simple, I was allowed to film this particular clitoridectomy because the little girl undergoing it was blind. I showed this film to American audiences for as long as I could. I refused to be the one to turn the lights on. I let it run, and run. Why do women perpetuate this? I don't know the answer, except that they're doing it because it was done to them. That's why I left the film run, even in front of American audiences. I wanted them to see it, in color, like I did. I've come to the conclusion there are two separate peoples in my country. Two completely different sets of people. Living side by side, not understanding each other. And I don't know how it happened. You see the trouble with the character I'm playing here, is she's obviously too soft. In the head.

PAULINE But some women are like that.

LEILA Why do you have to make Egyptian women like that?

PAULINE Because that's how I knew her, she was like that.

LEILA But this isn't real life, think of the statement you're making.

MARILYN That's the problem with statements. They can be argued about.

LEILA Marilyn makes no sense. I am going to have to write another play.

PAULINE Write another play.

LEILA I'd rather you rewrote this one.

PAULINE Are you going to do this or not?

LEILA Of course I am. No question. I am making an artistic suggestion.

PAULINE *(Going back to the scene)* Call the bastard. Call him!

LEILA Is that where we are?

PAULINE Yes. Call the bastard. Call him!

ZINA *(Returning reluctantly to scene)* He doesn't want to know.

PAULINE Neither do I, but I do. So does he. Do you want me to call him?

ZINA No, I'll see him at the hospital, sooner or later.

(BURT and DON have been having a smoke throughout this)

DON I like jeeps. What do you drive when you aren't driving a cab?

BURT Nothing, I can't afford a wife and a car. I won't be able to afford a car until I get a divorce, and I can't afford a divorce. Of course if I got a divorce I might be able to afford a car. But right now I can't afford a divorce or a car, only a wife and she works too.

DON I was thinking of buying a jeep.

BURT Must be doing well.

DON Couple of commercials. Filmwork.

BURT Pays your health insurance.

DON Might be a film coming up.

BURT Good for you!

PAULINE *(Loudly)* I can hear you!

BURT Sorry!

LEILA I can't stand the fact that those guys sit there smoking while I'm on stage.

DON Sorry!

BURT You smoke a pipe!

LEILA What's that got to do with it?

PAULINE Nothing!

MARILYN I'm preparing. I'm trying to go back to Little Neck.

PAULINE Let's get it together, here.

DON Okay, but I'd like to say... no, scratch that, I'd like to comment (because I don't want to make a statement) that there's an awful lot of politics being sprouted here that were the subtext of the play when I read it.

PAULINE I don't think now's the time to discuss this.

DON No discussion, it was a comment.

LEILA I'm sticking to the script as it is in my head.

DON Oh that script! Which head?

PAULINE Some of us like to focus on what the plays are saying.

DON Not me, I just do my character and get out of there. Seems to have worked for me so far.

PAULINE Not all of us have your opportunities.

DON My luck, you mean?

MARILYN What's going on here, why are you attacking Don? You were mad as hell when Leila went on.

PAULINE But I love her commitment.

HARAJ I would truly be committed to my play but this isn't my play and therefore I'd like to do my bit and get out of here please.

PAULINE God, do the rest of you feel like that?

BURT No, I've no wish to go home. I get a kick out of all your arguments.

PAULINE Keep going..

(HARAJ climbs on stage.)

HARAJ I like my part. I'm a sincere person, married to this weird, softhearted woman who's lost most of the time. She has no real connection here, she's a piece of driftwood. But I like her. Maybe she's good in bed. But I don't think my character cares that much about sex. He only has it once a month. That's what I think of scientists.

(DON is again in ARI's room, he sits on the bed.)

DON So your wife's got some relatives here?

ARI *(Returning to his space)* An aunt. Just an aunt at the moment.

DON That'll be nice for her to have someone close by.

ARI A few hours by train.

DON And does your wife work? Do women work in your country?

ARI She's a dressmaker.

DON But that's perfect. She can do that here.

ARI That's what I told her.

DON So your wife's got relatives here?

ARI *(Making a face)* An aunt. Just an aunt at the moment.

DON That'll be nice for her to have someone close by.

ARI A few hours by train.

DON And does your wife work? Do women work in your country?

ARI She's a dressmaker.

DON But that's perfect. She can do that here.

ARI That's what I told her.

ARI *(Increasingly perplexed as HARAJ that they're doing this again.)* That's what I told her.

DON *(By way of an apology)* Can we take a break?

BURT Okay, break! Fifteen!

HARAJ Are you getting double salary being in both plays?

DON Now that would be something. To make up for playing two jerks.

HARAJ I think you're well meaning. In our play.

DON Oh yes I am. But the way he's written he won't get any sympathy.

HARAJ *(Before he descends from stage)* There is a certain eu-la-lic quality in this play..

LEILA Break means getting off the stage.

HARAJ Can't talk to her.

DON Because you don't talk about the UN.

HARAJ Who keeps up with the UN?

DON All I know about the UN is, you can never find anywhere to park near there.

BURT Coming Marilyn? You've got to eat today!

MARILYN If I can.

PAULINE You've only got fifteen minutes, don't forget.

(ACTORS exit, and lights go on for intermission.)

ACT TWO

(The ACTORS return from their break. DON is wearing headphones)

PAULINE I think it's going to work, putting them together.

DON But it makes some of the scenes so short.

HARAJ *(Mounting the stage)* That's the style these days.

BURT Marilyn's just coming. From the top of page thirty!

(MARILYN enters. In the hotel room, MARIBEN has returned from Little Neck.)

ARI You're back early.

MARIBEN I was there a lifetime.

ARI You're in a strange mood. How was it?

MARIBEN Ugly. No one notices. Abandoned warehouses, old playgrounds of cracked concrete, broken signs and wires across the street.

ARI America's beautiful, the Rockies, the rivers.

MARIBEN I'm talking downtown. The traffic was worse than I remembered on Five Island, five lanes coming right at you.

ARI What did you expect? Goats? Chickens? Did you find your mother? Was anybody home?

MARIBEN Aunt Jane, she was the same. Her house was cozy for five minutes until she started to complain about Uncle Bill. He's talking too long to floss his teeth, and in front of the television, when she's told him the best place to floss is on the toilet where you've got your privacy and your two hands free.

ARI They haven't heard from your mother?

MARIBEN No, no one's seen her the whole year. She's disappeared before. When she finally showed up, all she talked about was changing the color of her hair.

ARI We have a lot in common. No family. In order to do my work, I have to leave my family behind, my homeland.

MARIBEN I don't want to come back here.

ARI You've just had a bad experience with that mother of yours.

MARIBEN I was watching people on the street, and none of them has that sure-fire certainty-of-home look your people have. We're still looking, wandering, leaving.

PAULINE *(From the table)* I can't hear you.

MARIBEN I was watching people on the street, and none of them has that sure-fire certainty-of-home look your people have. We're still looking, wandering, leaving.

PAULINE *(From the table)* Louder, I can't hear you.

MARIBEN We've got that in common... *(Breaking her character)*

MARILYN I can't say it any louder than that.

PAULINE Why not?

HARAJ She doesn't have the throat muscles.

MARIBEN We've got that in common, losing our land. Every one of us, every family here at one time lost their land. Like you're doing now. Even if some of them left it purposely for freedom, for oli-oli-infree freedom, it's the same loss.

PAULINE Can't you say it any louder?

MARILYN No!

ARI And why are you dressed in those clothes?

MARIBEN I put on my scarf and my accent. I was your mother or sister, people I love,

trying to find a job, scraping away at dirty dishes, kneeling in shoe stores. Immigrants, pioneers, who can't see because their eyes are clouded with hope.

ARI Don't talk like a poet.

MARIBEN Like yours are now.

ARI It's upsetting!

MARIBEN Look at your eyes, you're one of them.

ARI Aren't you?

MARIBEN No, I've been here before.

MARILYN to PAULINE Enough spirit that time?

PAULINE No. But better. You've got to play against her submissiveness or there'll be no scene.

HARAJ Why don't you hit him with your shoe? Do something active like that.

MARILYN I'm suffering.

HARAJ Aren't you tired of suffering?

MARILYN YES!

HARAJ Write strong women, why don't you? Even if you're not. By the way I really want to tell you people about my play. Two great women's roles and I'd like the part of the man.

PAULINE Let's hear it.

(HARAJ descends stage and faces others seated at the table, and round the coffee table)

HARAJ Based on an absolutely true story, absolutely true. And even more amazing, this character's problem is not so different from Ari's. The story's going round the middle-eastern communities, so it's not clear exactly where it originates. Well, I'm sure it's either Lebanon, or Syria. I think it was Lebanon. This man's married and after a few years discovers his wife has fallen

in love with his mother. Like you, Mariben.

LEILA Ha ha, yes, like you Marilyn.

MARILYN I wasn't in love with his mother, or his sisters. Maybe all of them together, yes, with his entire country.

HARAJ *(Gathering the attention of the others)*
I'm not sure of the country, but I am of the details. The women wore veils, and were village women. And this means, in that part of the world, the wife was chosen by the mother as being the most desirable wife for miles around. As is the custom. But as time goes by... the mother is living with them, as is often the case... they're shopping and cooking together and probably the wife doesn't get on with the husband. He complains about her like married couples do, you can imagine. But the wife gradually discovers she no longer wants the husband but his mother. She's in love with his mother.

LEILA Were they found together?

HARAJ They eloped and declared themselves lovers.

PAULINE That's pretty shocking.

LEILA I never heard of such a thing.

BURT They must have written to him, the son and husband. Dear John, now that's a dear-john letter!

MARILYN How awful for him!

HARAJ Good part for someone.

PAULINE So then what does he do?

HARAJ Threatens to kill both of them. Says he'll search for them and murder both. But he can't find them.

MARILYN His mother too?

HARAJ Wouldn't you?

LEILA It's more like a Greek story.

HARAJ It's not Greek. It's Lebanese, or Syrian. So far he hasn't found them. Perhaps he still loves them and is not looking very hard.

MARILYN Umm, that's not a very good ending for a play.

HARAJ Not unless we change it. He does find them, he kills them and then himself, Hamlet.

MARILYN Not like my story, my character's. I never wanted to run away with his mother.

HARAJ Sounds to me as if you'd like to. You may be bisexual, like the woman in my story.

MARILYN She's not. I'm not.

HARAJ Don't shout. Bisexuals exist and we're discriminated against.

MARILYN She is not a bisexual. That's just not in her character.

LEILA Maybe you like Ari's father. That's why you like his homeland so much. You want to have an affair with his father.

HARAJ Or, while we're drawing parallels Ari could come to America and run off with her father. Making him bisexual instead. Which would make another interesting story, you see. I'd like to play that part. Better than this dried up scientist, Ari. Why don't you make Ari a bisexual who runs off with Marilyn's father?

MARILYN I can't.

HARAJ Consider it.

MARILYN I don't know who my father is!

HARAJ That's the trouble with America, you can't break away from tradition because no tradition exists. What do you think?

PAULINE Write it.

HARAJ I have started writing it in my head.

DON I like it.

HARAJ Thanks!

DON Can we get on? I'm expecting a phone call.

LEILA As JOHN?

BURT Dear John.

DON Dear Zina. Dear Zina...

(He waves LEILA to her seat in restaurant)

JOHN I'm sorry, I should have called you.

ZINA That's okay, I know you're on nights now.

JOHN But still I should have called you. I was too depressed.

ZINA That's because you're on nights.

JOHN No it isn't.

ZINA You look tired.

JOHN It's been busy with the holidays.

ZINA Yes I was glad to be busy.

JOHN That's the time most people get sick it seems. I'm glad they're over.

ZINA Have you thought about us?

JOHN You know I wanted to go all the way with you, marriage, and children.

ZINA I guessed.

JOHN Yes, yes, that's why I wanted to take you home to meet my parents.

ZINA Perhaps it was too soon to meet them.

JOHN No, I don't think so.

ZINA Before we get to know each other properly.

JOHN I wanted them to like you and they did like you.

ZINA It was you who didn't.

JOHN *(Takes a deep breath)* I'm sorry I freaked, I didn't understand why at the time. Because you'd told me.

ZINA You don't have to apologize.

JOHN It wasn't until I analyzed the situation that I realized why, the reason why I freaked was because it came to me, once I'd introduced you to my parents, that you had parents. I'd kinda forgotten that, pushed it out of my mind because they lived in Egypt. They'd be our kids' grandparents.

ZINA What's wrong with that? With them?

JOHN Thinking of them, how your parents allowed that..

ZINA They arranged it.

JOHN That's what I mean.

ZINA It's the tradition.

JOHN If I met them, there'd be too much I'd never be able to say, too much tension between us.

ZINA I told you they think they're doing something good for you, helping you get a husband.

JOHN But how am I going to face them, feeling the way I do?

ZINA A better husband.

JOHN I couldn't be honest.

ZINA I know that's important to you, to be honest.

JOHN I ought to be Christian and forgiving,
but it's just not that easy.

ZINA No.

JOHN I'm not and in this case, I don't want to
be. Because..

ZINA Are you sure this is not just an excuse?

JOHN Children love their grandparents and
respect them more than the parents, often
as not. I did.

ZINA I think this grandparent talk is an
excuse because of what you don't feel for
me. That's what I think.

JOHN No, maybe some of that, yes. But no! It'd
just be too difficult. I'm sorry.

ZINA I'm sorry too.

JOHN I hope we can still be friends.

ZINA I don't think so.

(Back at their space, PAULA and ZINA)

PAULA *(Mounting the stage, passing by JOHN as
he exits)* You can find better than John.
You can find saints here, saints and
angels walking around in business suits,
carrying briefcases with plans to cut out
kids' lunch programs. The enemy's
everywhere. Be on guard. Self-defense,
practise it! Above all don't trust
doctors who butcher your feelings. I hate
them. Doctors.

ZINA Doctors? Why?

PAULA Getting rich from people's sickness and
then thinking they can be HAPPY ABOUT IT!

ZINA I don't think that's quite fair. Doctors
and nurses have to help people, even on
days they don't want to.

PAULA If I were you, I'd pack a pistol and go
shoot him.

ZINA I don't think so.

PAULA Why not? Don't you want to shoot him?

ZINA No!

PAULA No?

ZINA Yes, yes. *(Laughs)* But that wouldn't change his mind.

PAULA It might, if you injured the right side of his brain.

ZINA I don't think so.

PAULA There are times you hate yourself and you know why? Because people are so rotten and you're one of them and not all that different. That's when you give up and start hating yourself. Because they're ONLY human, like you. It gets confused, you can't tell the difference between good and the bad people. If only they looked different from you.

(DON stands)

DON *(To HARAJ)* Is that in?

HARAJ *(On book)* Written in yesterday.

(PLUMBER, who is BURT, is in MARILYN's room with his toolbar)

PLUMBER The washers were stolen, there's your problem. Taps were unscrewed by the previous inhabitants who took the washers. Needed them at home is my guess. Trying to save a few cents. Budget deficit.

MARIBEN What is this Budget Deficit?

PLUMBER How long you been out the country? The war's over you know.

MARIBEN Which one?

PLUMBER Well, they're back from Nam. Even the missing ones. No one knows if the other one's over. You'd think so, because we've had the parade but that might have been to fool the enemy.

MARIBEN Or us?

DON You speak excellent English, excellent.

MARIBEN I learn good, yes.

DON Ari told me you have relatives in this country.

MARIBEN Leettle Neck.

DON More or less in this country. *(HE laughs)*
How do you like Boston so far? Have you been shopping? Big department stores!

MARIBEN I went to the Combat Zone.

DON The Combat Zone? Oh dear, you don't want to shop there. Boston's architecturally very interesting. I've lived here ten years and I still find it quite beauteous. Ari tells me you're a dressmaker so I'm sure you'll enjoy our fine department stores.

MARIBEN Saks Fifth Avenue.

DON Yes! I'm amazed myself sometimes at some of these stores. Seven or eight floors of women's clothes. You must have seen them. But you sew for individuals I suppose.

MARIBEN Yes!

DON That's a very attractive dress you're wearing. Native cloth?

MARIBEN What?

DON Did you make it yourself? *(MARIBEN nods)*
The cloth too? I mean it's handwoven cloth isn't it?

MARIBEN Oh, yes by leettle girls.

DON It looks so much more attractive than the factory made stuff.

MARIBEN Very leeeeeetle girls.

DON Really? They weave cloth? I see. How old are they?

MARIBEN Two, three, the best.

DON The best little girls weave cloth?

MARIBEN Cloth and carpets, the finest.

DON The finest little girls weave carpets?

MARIBEN No, little girls weave the best. Small fingers. Can go in and out of the...

DON ...threads!

MARIBEN So that means the very finest carpets are woven by the leetlest girls.

DON The Turkish, oriental carpets? The ones that come from the Middle-East that we call oriental? Little girls make them? I'd no idea. Don't they go to school?

MARIBEN The Government say all children go to school.

DON But in fact, they don't. There are a great many carpets being made. I bought one myself. I'd no idea, little girls... What about their mothers?

MARIBEN They work next to them.

DON That's terrible. Here in America all children go to school, and after school they go to playgrounds and have time to play. Here your children will have many chances to play. Mine don't know when to stop.

(ARI enters, surprised at MARIBEN's scarf)

DON Your wife has been entertaining me with wondrous stories about your country, the leetle, little girls weaving cloth and carpets. Quite amazing! And I've been telling her how beauteous Boston is. When the conference is over I'll introduce her to my wife.

ARI Thank you!

DON I think you're all set now that Levison recommended you.

ARI He was one of my favorite professors.

DON He said you were one of his brightest students. Which coming from Levison, if you know Levison, is high praise.

ARI Yes!

DON If you decide to move here, I'm sure you'll do very well indeed, either with us or somewhere else.

ARI Thank you!

DON Only too happy to help! Your husband is a genius.

(They laugh)

MARILYN You've made my day. Three or four days.

DON Your wife's quite humorous. Fast study, like you, eh? Very intelligent!

ARI I suppose so, but it's not usually that obvious.

DON Not many people catch it, eh? I'm a bit of a fast study myself.

ARI I'm sure you are.

DON Are you going to hear the Bukofsky paper?

ARI Yes, I'll be down in a minute.

(DON exits)

ARI Why did you do that, pretend you were a foreigner? You scared me. *(Beat)* You scare me.

(PAULINE stands)

PAULINE Me too. Don't do that in real life. Don't pretend to be who you're not. Especially if you're an actress; that's spreading yourself too thin, girl. You might wake up one morning and find yourself missing.

DON I carry my driver's license even when I'm not driving, in case I don't recognize myself in the morning.

MARILYN It happened to you too?

DON On drugs, which I don't do any more. But sometimes it's a thin line.

PAULINE When I went to Europe I told people I came from Africa, because I wanted them to look at me not my country.

BURT I wouldn't like not being an American.

DON Me neither.

BURT Especially in a foreign country.

LEILA If you weren't American, you'd be one of us. Think about that.

MARILYN That's who I want to be.

(BURT exits)

LEILA Hey, I know where Ari can come from - Pakistan. That's a Moslem country where a woman got to be Prime Minister

HARAJ Oh but she's an exception.

PAULINE Wasn't her father Prime Minister?

LEILA She got elected, she's not a private person.

MARILYN Her father was assassinated, and then she took over.

HARAJ She got the sympathy vote.

LEILA So what? You don't elect the daughters of presidents, assassinated or not. The daughters of politicians don't get elected here. What happens to them?

PAULINE They get fucked.

LEILA Have your character come from Pakistan. Or his daughter may have her clit removed.

MARILYN It doesn't happen in Ari's country. The regime's a little religious, but I got used to not showing my knees.

HARAJ You see how those religious fanatics have got to you, and I'm trying to do research under that regime!

MARILYN I'm not really fond of my knees.

HARAJ Who's talking about knees! I'm talking about the freedom to think, to speak. Your birthright, that you take for granted.

LEILA There's so much that can't be told, because it's too complicated to put into a pretty little situation.

HARAJ I understand why Ari doesn't want to go back. Here's a whole new nation to experience, so many possibilities.

LEILA I've done that, thought the next man must be better, the next country, the next second! Not necessarily! (To HARAJ) Go home, you're never going to be appreciated here.

HARAJ I am, in the scientific community.

LEILA With your accent? Go back!

HARAJ I can't go back, you go back.

LEILA No, I know what I'm doing. (To cast) I want to tell you a story.

BURT No, not now!

LEILA I have to tell you about a visit I made to Iran. An old lover of mine invited me. It's about the theatre. Years ago I was invited to his production of Antigone. This was during the Shah's time. Antigone was daring stuff, the young girl who defies the old king whose time is past. My friend directed and also played Creon, he's that sort of man. It was a great success. The audience got the message. This time my friend was invited to direct "Death of a Salesman". "Death of a Salesman" in Khomeini's Iran appealed to everyone. The people who wanted to pump art into the religious system, people who wanted a play by Arthur Miller, a Jew,

criticizing the system, people who wanted death and America together in one sentence.

On the plane, above Teheran, we women were required to remove our lipstick and nail polish. Remover was provided. Black headscarves, at inflated prices. When we landed there was a sea of black with faces swimming in it. Like being in a convent, except for the men. Even on stage the women's hair and ankles were covered, including the prostitute's, the one Willy Loman is with when his sons come to visit him. That looked odd. But not the headscarf on his wife, Linda, in Brooklyn. The actress playing Linda was the one who played Antigone ten years previously. She was frustrated by her part. "Linda does nothing," she complained. "She's a servant in this play." In the audience, opening night, I felt glad. Even in that situation, because my friend was on stage. Although I remembered how she was when she was a young girl, defying the tyrant. Here she was, ringing her hands beside the grave. When she says the words, "Why suicide, Willy, why, why?" I stood up and shouted, "WHY?" Guards came and took me outside.

Outside I lit up a cigarette, where a woman lighting a cigarette in public is an act of freedom, revolution. It seems like that here now in your no-smoking zones but there it wasn't only irritation, but the interpretation of the Koran I was challenging. Irritation too, of course.

Later that night we went to a fairground. We had to wait until there were enough women because we couldn't ride the bumper cars with the men. We waited until there were enough women and took our turn on the bumper cars. We drove them as fast as we dared, and bumped the other women as hard as we could. They hit us back, laughing we attacked. I never laughed so much, at myself... What was I doing? Was I crazy? In a bumper car with a veil, all because of some man?

HARAJ

Being a foreigner.

PAULINE Having a good time?

HARAJ But the worst enemies are the closest ones, the ones at home. They know how to do the most damage. Cut you down in your prime. That's why people come here to America.

LEILA Your worst enemies can be friends of your parents, invited into your home, to perform painful rituals.

MARILYN Like Christmas and Thanksgiving.

BURT Never do business with friends or relatives. Other people, much safer.

HARAJ That's why I came.

DON Here at least, we're allowed to play other parts, as many as we can.

HARAJ Some of us came all the way here to BECOME other people.

BURT Other people are fine by me. If they respect the law, that is.

MARILYN Thank God for other people, and there are more other people in the theatre..

PAULINE Tell me this though, how soon do these other people, after becoming your friends, turn into your enemies?

DON It doesn't matter. Because that's when we get up and go out looking for OTHER people.

MARILYN Does that mean we don't know about love or loyalty?

DON There's always that possibility. Go back to your husband!

LEILA And what about fidelity?

HARAJ Love, loyalty and fidelity. All things we want in OTHER people.

PAULINE I don't have any problems with commitment and loyalty.

MARILYN She doesn't actually.

PAULINE Let's get back to reality.

(DON, ARI and MARIBEN are in the hotel room again)

DON Ari's research depends on this job. And this job depends on his research.

MARIBEN I'm not stopping him from accepting the job.

DON I think you'll like it here. Of course you don't have to become an American, simply live here and take advantage of everything we have to offer.

MARIBEN Saks Fifth Avenue.

DON Yes, you could sew for them maybe. And if you don't want to do that, you can certainly buy from them. At Ari's salary.

MARIBEN What can I buy? Hats?

DON You could buy a truckload of different hats, scarves, jewelry. Don't believe that myth about American streets not being safe. They are in Boston. As safe as most cities. And we've got more hospitals.

MARIBEN In case I get sick.

DON In case you run into trouble.

ARI Americans, you know, don't have money worries like they do in Europe and other countries.

MARIBEN That's hard to believe.

DON The Company has generous benefits, healthcare, dentistry for the whole family. For your children, if you have any.

MARIBEN My children.

ARI We'll have American children, like in the movies.

DON We're basically a charming people, even if we're not known for being humble and modest. We do great things out of the goodness of our hearts, we go to the jungle and build hospitals. Not many other nations do that. We give millions in aid away. To the Russians even. We care.

MARILYN Nobody seemed to care in Little Neck.

DON Of course we do. You won't find America in Little Neck, it's bigger than that. How long were you there?

MARIBEN Too long!

DON You sound to me as if you've been to an American High School.

ARI Of course she has, she was born here. She's an American.

DON An American?

MARILYN So I do know what you're talking about.

DON I'm trying to sell America to an American? I shouldn't have to do that. You made a fool of me.

(He goes to exit, ARI follows him)

ARI She's upset because she wants to live in my country, not here. She says she's felt like a foreigner since she came back.

DON She behaves like one.

ARI She loves my family and the customs and traditions, she doesn't have that here. Her mother is some sort of wanderer, and she grew up without knowing who her father is.

DON That's not so uncommon. Dysfunctional family.

ARI Is that right? Is that what they call it?

DON Apparently they're becoming the norm. Only two point eight percent live like

Norman Rockwell illustrations, according to what I read.

ARI I'm beginning to think she married me for my foreign passport.

(They turn back to MARIBEN, or she returns if she exited during this)

ARI Don's wife is from The Azores.

DON The Ozarks.

ARI She was a farm girl.

DON Still is, she goes back in the summers, yes, three months of the year she's back there.

ARI You see, you can go back to visit.

DON Of course! You'll be able to afford the airfare. Go home for two to three months or more, I'm sure Ari won't mind.

MARILYN Three months in Little Neck?

ARI No, Don means then you can go back and visit my mother.

MARIBEN The door to his mother's house is always open. Naturally the things in the house gently collect dust; but butterflies fly in, butterflies as big as birds. When she walks by, she doesn't look at her things but puts out her hand to touch them.

DON So where did you two meet?

ARI In a Deli.

DON They have Delis in your country too? Or did you meet here? *(ARI nods)* You met while you were studying. Now I'm beginning to see.

ARI I would go in after school.

MARILYN I was taking fashion design in the evenings.

DON Isn't that fascinating, how people meet? Are you coming to catch the last lecture?

ARI I don't think so.

DON On oxygen-free radicals. They're a little hobby of mine. They may be responsible for colds and flu. Imagine coming up with a cure for them, eh?

ARI Imagine your stock options then!

DON I am!

(They exit stage)

BURT *(Realizing he should be in the scene with PAULA)* Oops, sorry I'm late.

PAULA Not the second swim team!

BURT You want me to cut your championship basketball team?

PAULA No, we've got to talk. *(SHE blows whistle)* Great, guys, same time tomorrow.

BURT We've got to make cuts.

PAULA But the second team supports the first, they're as good as the first.

BURT I know, because the first are lousy.

PAULA You can't win them all.

BURT I'm not blaming you.

PAULA I don't care if you blame me, give me back the team. I don't get any other support.

BURT Stop hassling me.

PAULA That's the least those bastards can do.

BURT Calm yourself!

PAULA I've nothing to be calm about.

BURT So you're getting fucked like everyone else. Might do you some good!

PAULA What did you say?

BURT You have an attitude.

PAULA I want us to be the best.

BURT You think you are the best.

PAULA What's wrong with that?

BURT Nothing, but I don't agree with you.

PAULA Then get someone better. I quit.

(PAULA and ZINA's space. ZINA is packing)

PAULA I lost my temper, I lost my job. And now you're flying off.

ZINA You're angry at me.

PAULA I am, yes! Don't go! Don't run away.

ZINA I've had my experience here.

PAULA You've had it! So have I. I'd go. I'd go if I had the chance.

ZINA Come with me.

PAULA Why not? I don't have a job. Except that I can't go flying around the world like you do.

ZINA Why not?

PAULA How can you go back? How? How can you care? I don't care! Please don't leave.

ZINA I want to.

(Back to the hotel room)

DON Ari's been explaining to me that you'll miss his country. What will you miss the most?

MARIBEN Tear Spoons.

ARI Good thing! They don't cry in America. Everyone has a good time here.

DON Spoons? Are we talking about drugs?

ARI Tear Spoons. You don't have them here.
You know how to laugh.

MARILYN All the time.

DON I like a good laugh.

ARI Jokes, you're good at making jokes.

DON Really? Better than other nations?

ARI Oh yes, here you talk and laugh and talk
laugh. We see it on television.

DON We laugh at ourselves as well as others.

ARI I know, great entertainment.

DON What do you do with the spoons?

ARI Collect tears with them.

DON Whose tears?

ARI Whoever's crying. That's what they do,
sit around and cry for god's sake.

DON Why are they crying?

ARI That's their idea of a good time.

DON *(Laughs)* Is that right?

ARI Funny isn't it?

DON They're laughing so much they're crying?

ARI No, they're not laughing they're crying!

DON What about?

ARI Nothing, everything, they like crying.
They like it better than laughing.
Pathetic, isn't it?

MARILYN They use the spoon to collect the tears
in.

ARI Great fun, eh? Great fun!

DON But what exactly are they crying about?

MARIBEN Don't you ever cry?

DON Sometimes. When they play the National Anthem at the Superbowl. Why are these people crying?

MARIBEN Because you can't change anything.

ARI *(After a beat)* A concept which is in direct opposition to the scientific instinct. *(Privately to MARIBEN)* I don't understand why you don't love your country.

MARIBEN Do you love yours?

ARI I can't love a place. *(HARAJ breaks the scene)* Ari doesn't know who he is because he's not a sensual person. Unlike me.

(ZINA gives PAULA some tea)

PAULA That's good!

ZINA Lemon tea.

PAULA I don't need that rotten job. I can rob a bank.

ZINA Do you have a bank account? Then you can come with me to Egypt.

PAULA That's money I'm saving up to buy a car. Hell, I can't buy a car if I don't have a job.

ZINA You won't be able to pay the rent.

PAULA Then I'll live in the car. I'll buy an old wreck. I'll live in a cave.

ZINA You'll become a homeless person?

PAULINE One false step, that's all it takes. I don't blame you for wanting to go.

ZINA You think it's going to be okay and that you can belong, then someone shows you it's not possible. You're too different. That's what I wrote to Saadawi.

PAULA Saadawi? The writer?

ZINA She's also a doctor in the hospital. She offered me a job.

PAULA She's a doctor too? I just read her latest book.

ZINA I want to work with her. Because she had it, the same as me. Remember? In the same awful fashion. And she does politics against it.

PAULA I'd like to meet this woman. You'll tell me she's married and has a family next.

ZINA She has, yes.

PAULA A superwoman.

ZINA Come to Egypt and meet her.

PAULINE I wish I could. Egypt? I've always wanted to see the pyramids.

ZINA Oh, they're a disappointment. Everyone says so.

PAULINE The pyramids? What about the Sphinx? That can't be a disappointment.

ZINA It's smaller than you think, and then Napoleon shot off its nose.

PAULINE Why did he do that?

ZINA Who knows? Come and meet Saadawi.

PAULA I've no money. You mean buy a plane ticket with the money I was saving to buy a car?

ZINA Yes, you can stay with my family, if that's all right?

PAULA Thank you, but supposing I run out of money.

ZINA You can get a job teaching English.

PAULINE I don't know how to speak English. *(Laughing at her presumption)* Egypt? Egypt?

(In the hotel room, DON stands waiting for ARI, who sits)

DON Ready?

ARI I'm ready!

DON Good! Any news of your wife?

ARI She'll be okay, this is her country.

DON We'll keep you busy.

ARI And at night I can always take a sleeping pill.

DON That's right, you'll soon recover.

ARI *(Remaining seated)* Inshallah! I'll go back and get another wife, one who'll like it over here.

HARAJ *(Breaking the scene, but still seated)* Ari won't know what he's lost until he's won a prize, a few honorary doctorates and is into a major depression. Then he'll lie awake like I do. Remembering the walks I used to take along the Tebi path.

LEILA I miss the smells of my country.

DON I didn't know countries have smells.

LEILA Oh yes! When you change countries and learn a new language you lose track of yourself for a while, which is a great relief both to you and your immediate family. But then you wake up one morning and you're not who-you-used-to-be and you're not sure of where you are, you're not really accepted and all you've got is your dogs.

DON How long have you been here?

LEILA Ten years!

DON You're an American after ten years!

LEILA Easy to say. The worst thing is when you go back and you don't belong there, your country has gone on without you. Have you done that?

HARAJ No. I don't care about my country.

LEILA Not your country, your own place.

HARAJ Yours or mine?

BURT We haven't finished you know.

(In this next section it isn't clear until Don's problem whether they are in character or not)

DON Find your mother.

MARILYN/BEN Aren't I too old to need a mother?

LEILA/ZINA When you do go back, you'll see what I mean.

MARILYN/BEN I've got to go back to where I came from.

ARI/HARAJ Go, go.

LEILA/ZINA Come with me!

ARI/HARAJ I'm staying.

PAULA/PAULINE I'm flying.

MARILYN *(To PAULINE)* Are you really going to Egypt?

PAULINE I'm flying. I probably chose Zina as a roommate because I was ready for Egypt, so here I come. Not going to change my religion or wear a veil but I'm going to see what's going down over there, find out about Africa.

MARILYN I don't like my character.

PAULINE You've got to like her, she's you.

BURT *(To MARILYN)* Let's you and me split, babe.

MARILYN Got a car?

LEILA Give me a Seven Forty Seven.

BURT End of play, end of playssss...

DON *(To PAULINE)* If we're done, I have another phone call to make.

PAULINE No...

DON Sorry, I thought we had.

BURT Oh yes, there's going to be a primal hum.
That's how we ended yesterday.

DON Okay, hum...

(They start to hum)

PAULINE Wait a minute, have you got something
more important to do?

DON Moi?

PAULINE *(To DON)* Have you got another job?

DON No!

PAULINE Don's leaving us.

DON No, no. There's a part I'm up for in a
movies.

(The following section goes very fast and overlaps)

MARILYN You can't go!

DON I'm not!

PAULINE He's going!

HARAJ Hey, you can't go!

LEILA You can't leave now, you're one of us.
You've learned our language.

BURT Right, he almost knows his lines.

DON I know my lines.

PAULINE What? When?

DON My agent's still haggling.

MARILYN Then you've got the movie!

PAULINE Cripes, this ship is really sinking!

HARAJ I know why he's leaving. Now that we're
doing both plays together it's more
obvious he's the over-educated villain.
And he doesn't like that. The writers are
down on education. Anti-intellectuals!

PAULINE How can you desert us?

HARAJ Let him make his phone call.

DON It's the stories that are important.
Isn't that right? The stories, not us.

MARILYN He's already got the job.

DON She's a witch.

MARILYN I can read your face.

BURT What is it?

DON Two men on horses in Arizona and Texas,
and I think New Mexico, chasing each
other, I get to wear chaps but we're not
cowboys. It's a psychological thriller.

HARAJ Are they in love?

DON No, they're not.

PAULINE Sounds phony to me.

MARILYN A change of pace.

LEILA Sure, a welcome relief.

HARAJ Are we intense?

ALL NO, NOOO!

PAULINE Were you the outsider?

DON I didn't think so. You might get someone
better.

LEILA That's what I thought, the next man, the
next country, the next second might be
better.

MARILYN Is it the plays?

PAULINE Aren't they good enough for you?

DON No, no, it's the movies, the money. You
can understand that?

(THEY all nod)

DON But if you're interested in what I think, the white guy in both plays is nothing but a stereotype. I won't say a bad stereotype, but not a sympathetic one.

PAULINE IS that why you're leaving?

DON No, I'm trying to make a living out of this gig.

MARILYN He's going to make a living.

DON If I can't make a living, I'll make a killing.

(HE exits)

LEILA Let him kill. I don't think the roles are an exaggeration.

BURT Do we rehearse tomorrow? *(No one knows)* I hope so, I get my kicks coming here. I love you people.

PAULINE Same time tomorrow. If anyone knows anyone who can replace Don, bring them.

(BURT exits. MARILYN and PAULINE pack up)

HARAJ I want you to help translate some of my poetry.

LEILA I didn't know you wrote poetry?

HARAJ Doesn't everybody?

(THEY exit)

PAULINE Stereotypes! He doesn't see them how we see them. We don't like what we see either.

MARILYN Do you think it'll work putting them together?

PAULINE Yes.

MARILYN There aren't too many realities.

PAULINE That's the reality.

END OF PLAY