

LOVE PERSON

by

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Development History:

LOVE PERSON was originally created in a Many Voices Residency at the *Playwrights' Center of Minneapolis*, MN, with its first reading in May 2005.

Commissioned for further development by *Mixed Blood Theater* in July 2006.

Workshopped and received a reading at the *Lark Play Development Center* in NY as part of Playwrights Week in September 2006.

Selected for reading at the *National New Play Network (NNPN)* conference at the New Jersey Repertory Theater in December 2006.

Received a Workshop Production at Icarus Falling Theatre, Lansing, MI in July 2007

Produced in a NNPN CLNPF rolling world premiere in 2008 at Mixed Blood Theater (MN), Marin Theater (CA), and Phoenix Theater (IN)

Production History:

Mixed Blood Theatre, Minneapolis, MN -2008

Marin Theatre, Mill Valley, CA -2008

Live Girls! Theater, Seattle, WA -2008

Phoenix Theatre, Indianapolis, IN -2009

Alley Repertory Theatre, Boise, ID -2009

Victory Gardens Theater, Chicago, IL -2009

Sanskrit verses from:

Sanskrit Love Poetry

translated by

W.S. Merwin and

J. Moussaieff Masson

Columbia University Press, NY, 1977

Copyright line:

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The world premiere of *Love Person* was presented by The Mixed Blood Theatre (Minneapolis, MN, Artistic Director: Jack Reuler) on February 29, 2008 with the following cast and production team:

CAST:

Vic	Jennifer Maren
Free	Alexandria Wailes
Maggie	Erin Andersson
Ram	Rajesh Bose

PRODUCTION TEAM:

Director	Risa Brainin
Set Designer	Nayna Ramey
Lighting Designer	Michael Klaers
Sound Designer	Andrew Mayer
Costume Designer	Christine Richardson
Projections Design	Nayna Ramey & Michael Klaers
Sign Master	Raymond Luczak
Dramaturg	Liz Engleman

Characters:

Vic	30's, 2 divorces, drinks too much. Free's sister. Some basic ASL skills. -Brash
Free	30's-40's, Deaf, Maggie's lover, Vic's older sister. Uses ASL exclusively, does not voice. -Restless
Maggie	30's-40's, English Lit professor, Free's lover. Fluent ASL, interpreting for Free is 2 nd nature. When they're alone together they sign only. -Content
Ram (pronounced Raahm)	Sanskrit Professor from East Coast, 2 nd generation, fully westernized. Here on a short visit, quiet and intelligent. -Lonely

Set:

On the back wall is a large screen where all email communications and telephone calls are displayed, also the dialogue of scenes that are ASL only, as specified.

IF your production opts for ASL access, as opposed to screen access, to the scenes between Vic and Ram...

A streetlight where Maggie interprets the scenes between Vic and Ram into ASL, and where Free performs the ASL poems in Parts 2 and 3. The streetlight provides a heightened reality where Free and Maggie connect with their memories of the past, and their present day fascinations with Ram and Vic, while at the same time providing bilingual access.

Sound:

The qualities of sound and silence are important elements in this play.

Vic's world (ie the club) is noisy, drunk, and full of people. By contrast Free's world (her home with Maggie) is silent. Ram's home is quiet, though not necessarily silent. How noisy or quiet the characters are supports the connections they make, Free and Ram have quiet in common, Maggie and Vic both have a need for some noise.

The poems opening parts 2 and 3 relate to Free and Ram, and should be just the Sanskrit and ASL in conversation with each other with no extraneous sound. At its most basic level, this play is a love story between ASL and Sanskrit.

The poems opening parts 1 and 4 relate to Ram and Vic, so sound may leak in from Vic's world, ie club music in part 1.

More traditional sound design does have a place in, for instance, transitions, and Ram and Free's email correspondences. Piano music (*like typing, like snow*) may be suitable.

Reading the Script:

Bold

Italics

Bold & Italics

UPPER CASE

Plain script

Primary Speaker/Voicer or Interpreter

English

ASL

English and ASL

STAGE DIRECTIONS

On screen communication

for instance marks when Maggie interprets

PART I

Scene 1

RAM'S VOICE IN DARK RECITING VERSE FROM SRNGARATILAKA, VERSE APPEARS ON SCREEN IN SANSKRIT SCRIPT. DURING THE VO, LIGHTS FADE UP ON VIC AND RAM IN VIC'S APARTMENT, DIMLY LIT, THROBING MUSIC. VIC LAUGHS AND MOVES TO THE MUSIC, EYES CLOSED, GLASS OF RED WINE IN HAND. RAM WATCHES HER, FASCINATED, AROUSED. LIGHTS FADE OUT.

Ram v-o

Aviditasukhaduhkham nirgunam vastu kincit
Jadamatir iha kascin moksa ityacacakse
Mama tu matam anangasmerata runyaghurnan-
Madakalamadir aksi- nivimokso hi moksah

LIGHTS UP ON RAM SPEAKING AT A NIGHTCLUB, SIMILAR THROBING MUSIC TURNED DOWN LOW. NO ONE REALLY SHOWED UP, IT'S AWKWARD, BUT HE FINISHES A SNIPPET OF THE POEM AND THEN READS THE TRANSLATION. VIC, FREE AND MAGGIE WATCH FROM A TABLE, MAGGIE TRIES TO INTERPRET THE POEM INTO ASL FOR FREE. ASL IS NOT ON SCREEN.

Ram	Maggie
...Madakalamadiraksi- nuvimokso hi moksah	wait...Sanskrit... Sanskrit...
OK, so in English...	OK, now English-
Some in this world insist That a certain whatever-it-is That has no taste of Joy or sorrow No qualities Is Release They are fools	People think something... whatever... no joy no sad lost people Free Which people? Maggie The people who think they're 'lost' Free What does that mean, 'lost'? Maggie It's poetry, wait, let me understand it Vic Pay attention!
To my mind her Body unfurling With joy of being young Flowering out of love Her eyes floating as with wine and Words wandering with love	

**Then the undoing of the knot
Of her sari
That
Is Release**

Maggie

*Ok, ok-
When young lovers, their clothes off
drunk, chatting, that is letting go-
Shit! Sorry. Did you get anything
from that?*

Free

(LAUGHING) That sucked!

RAM FINISHES, VIC CLAPS ENTHUSIASTICALLY. OUT OF SIGHT THERE IS HOOTING AND HOLLERING FROM BUSBOYS AND WAITRESSES- "YEAH RAM!" "NOT BAD MAN!" "WOOO..." EMBARRASSED, RAM EXITS TOWARD THE RUCKUS, MUTTERING 'SHUT UP' THUMPING CLUB MUSIC AMPS UP ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, REMAINS THROUGHOUT THE SCENE. MEANWHILE...
(ASL IS NOT ON SCREEN.)

Maggie

*I know, I'm sorry! I know I can do better, hold on,
let me try to summarize...*

Vic

Whadya think, huh? That was good, right?

Free

I have no clue

Vic

What? No!

Maggie

***My fault! That was terrible,
interpreter malfunction big
time***

Free

That's ok, it don't think it's my style

Vic

**Shit man, I really wanted
you to hear it!**

Maggie

Well it might have been your style if I hadn't screwed it up

Vic

Know what? I'll go get him, he can do it again, you're gonna love it, I swear, he's a total sweetheart! Maggie will rock it this time!

VIC EXITS

Hey Ram! Woooo, that rocked!

BEAT
(ASL ON SCREEN)

Free

She's sleeping with him

Maggie

So?

Free

"Oh hey, let's do something different, there's a poetry reading at the club, come on, it'll be fun-"

Maggie

Well, that was mostly true

Free

*Maybe she'll marry him- lucky #3.
How much do you want to bet she forgets about us and doesn't come back?*

Maggie

She's coming back. Stop being such a big sister, you're too judgmental- try to have some fun

VIC AND RAM ENTER, RAM IS STILL HOLDING THE POEM, HE IS COURTEOUS, BUT WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE.
(ASL NOT ON SCREEN)

Vic

OK, so Ram, this is my sister Free, also Jones, and her partner Maggie Etulain

Ram/Maggie

Hello, hello, pleased to meet you, I feel like an idiot

Vic

Nooo!

Maggie

That was a lovely reading, thank you!

Ram/Maggie

*No, thank you, for showing up-
-though the busboys found me fascinating, I'm sure!*

Maggie

Oh, actually, is that the poem? May I see it?

Ram

Sure, did I butcher it that badly?

RAM HANDS THE POEM TO MAGGIE

Maggie

No, no, I did...

FREE SNATCHES THE POEM

Free
(TO MAGGIE) *I'll just read it*

Maggie
You sure?

Maggie

...I butchered it, and I was feeling badly about it, so-

SILENT BEAT AS THEY WATCH FREE READ

Vic

OK, so you want a *drink*? On me!

Ram/Maggie

*No, thanks, I... I'll pass.
I get dehydrated on airplanes*

Vic

Aw, poor baby

Ram/Maggie

I should probably go get my bags. You can hang on to that if you'd like-

Vic

Hey, no, no, you've got time, siddown!

Ram/Maggie

Well, just a little bit, I like to be early- but I guess my ride's not here yet-

Vic

That's right, so kick back, enjoy the last few minutes of your vacation!

BEAT. MAGGIE TRIES TO MAKE CONVERSATION.

Maggie

Did you translate this poem? From the original?

Ram/Maggie

No, not at all, I don't do that sort of thing. This guy, Merwin, he's planning a book and the head of our department is collaborating, he wrote this one- It's the best translation I've come across, which is not saying much. Then again, it all sounds wrong to me once it leaves Sanskrit, so I'm a poor judge-

FREE IS DONE WITH THE POEM, HANDS THE PAPER BACK.

Ram/Maggie

What do you think?

Free/Maggie

Hard to say

Ram

Ah

Maggie

It's hard to translate English to ASL, especially poetry.

Vic

Maggie teaches poetry too!

Ram

Free

Oh?

Can we leave?

Maggie

Vic

Yes. Yes.

No! Stay!

Which is why I was particularly embarrassed

To do such a poor job of interpreting it. Um.

So, tell me more about this poem,

Why??

Free

It was great!

Ram/Maggie

Oh, it's ancient. Most of my work is. I didn't know what to read- then I thought maybe a thematic sort of tie-in, wine, bar, intoxication and, I don't know- Anyway, thanks. It was alright.

Vic

You kicked ass, I shit you not! And Maggie is like my smartest friend, she knows poetry, and she loved it! – so come on, relaaaax...

VIC KISSES RAM, IT'S AWKWARD

Vic

Don't be shy! Are you shy? He's shy!

Ram

Free/Maggie

No, I'm not shy

How did you two meet?

Vic

I just picked him up after my shift last Thursday

Ram/Maggie

I'm visiting my cousin Birju, the asshole who talked me into doing this reading and then didn't have the good grace to stick around to laugh at me.

Free

He better still be planning to take me to the airport, where is he?

He doesn't like that poem?

Free/Maggie

(Um, Free is asking)- You don't like it?

Ram

What?

Maggie

Your poem.

Ram/Maggie

No, I do! I'm sorry, I didn't mean to sound... It's one of my favorites actually. Just, in English, what's the difference really? It's some foreign thing that you're hearing, a novelty...though I'm delighted of course if you liked it... ah... I'm sorry, is there a protocol? Stupid question- should I speak slower so you can-?

Maggie

No, I'm fine. You can speak at your normal pace. You don't like translations?

Ram/Maggie

Hate them!

Vic

Hey!

Ram/Maggie

Hate them hate them hate them, they make me feel stupid

Vic

Well, I love this poem! I'm keeping it!

Maggie

I thought it was lovely-

Vic

*This is our poem!
I'm gonna frame it!
And, plus, handy letterhead- so I can
call you! Or, hey, email you.
Or, better still -fax!*

(THEY LOOK AT FREE & MAGGIE)

Guys?

(FREE GIVES MAGGIE A LOOK)

Maggie

What?

Free

How do you know it's beautiful?

Maggie

I'm just saying I think it is

Free

But you don't know

Maggie

Sorry! This is an ongoing debate for us. Practical concerns of daily life aside, Free would rather not bother with English. Which I find unrealistic-

FREE INTERRUPTS

Free

Ask what his poem really says

Maggie

Free is asking- What does your poem really say?

Ram/Maggie

How do you mean?

Free/Maggie

Just the words, what are all the words?

BEAT

Ram/Maggie

Oh great, now I'm going to if possible sound even more idiotic.

Ok, it's something like-

(HE GETS A LITTLE COMICAL WITH IT)

Foolish man- joy or pain in material things- worthless! Salvation!

*My opinion- uncovering... art of love intoxication- loosening the waistband-
salvation!*

You see, it's nonsense.

*I have to tell you though, that I find everything clearer in Sanskrit. It's more precise,
simpler.*

*What is true release, true love- it's hard to explain in any language, right? But I think
Sanskrit succeeds... or comes closer anyway...*

*Do you know it's at the root of most Indo-European languages? You're all speaking
Sanskrit right now, just in an incredibly impure form.*

Vic

Yeah?

Ram/Maggie

Yes... say something-

Vic

Say...? Like what?

Ram

Anything. Really.

Vic

Um. Hi, my name is Vic, I'm a Sagittarius?

Ram/Maggie

Sanskrit for name is naama.

Vic

No shit!

Ram

Absolutely none.

Vic

That is so cool! (TO MAGGIE) Ok, that was mine, now you go!

Ram/Maggie

Go is GAM!

Vic

Sweet! Who the hell knows shit like that?

Ram/Maggie

Thank you, that's my only party trick, I'm finished.

VIC LAUGHS A LOT

Free
Calm down-

Vic
What?

Free

You're like a hyperactive puppy

Vic
Fuck you

Free

(INTERRUPTING MAGGIE) I want to ask him a question. You said we are all speaking Sanskrit?

Maggie

(Free is asking) You said we're all speaking Sanskrit?

Ram/Maggie

Yes! It's just the roots of certain words, that's where you can track it...

Free/Maggie

I'm (Free's) not speaking Sanskrit

Ram/Maggie

No, of course not, but your signing has its basis in English-

Free/Maggie

No

MAGGIE TRIES TO COVER THE AWKWARDNESS

Maggie

...but I suppose if you're not really using ASL, if you're signing more English, that could be related... distantly...

FREE CATCHES HER ATTENTION

Free

I'm still talking

Free/Maggie

(Sorry) You're talking about the sounds of words, right?

Ram/Maggie

Yes

Free/Maggie

Then ASL has no Sanskrit root. In fact, you could say that gestures, which are the actual root of ASL, came before Sanskrit.

Am I right?

BEAT

Ram/Maggie

Sure. That's very interesting. What an interesting thought.

Free/Maggie

*I think English is a very confusing language. I feel bad for hearing people.
Like you two, for instance, how would you describe your relationship? Dating, flirting,
interested, long distance relationship? Don't know?
So many words, very little meaning.*

Vic

OK, Free, have some beer why don't you

Free

What? I'm just curious.

Ram/Maggie

OK... so what do you two call yourselves?

Free/Maggie

Lovers

Ram

Lovers?

Maggie

Lovers

BEAT

Ram/Maggie

*But lovers can apply to... lovers seems vague...so how do you make the distinction
between lets say less committed and more committed couples...?*

Free/Maggie

We don't need to. We're lovers

Ram/Maggie

Life-long lovers?

FREE LAUGHS

What's funny?

Free/Maggie

Hearing people

BEAT

Ram

What is that sign you used? Lovers-

Maggie

(MAGGIE DEMONSTRATES) *Lovers*

Ram

So this is love and then...

Maggie

It breaks down to love-person

Ram

Love person?

Maggie

Sure, same with any other sort of person, Teacher, Dancer... verb plus person.

Ram/Maggie

That's a bit clinical

Maggie

Accurate. You are what you do.

Ram/Maggie

Sure. Right.

BEAT

I'm sorry, I should track down my cousin, my flight leaves in a couple of hours

Vic

Already?

Ram/Maggie

It's been great Vic, really (RAM GIVES HER A QUICK HUG)

Vic/Maggie

Definitely! Yeah, stay in touch, ok?

Ram/Maggie

Yes! Nice meeting you both!

Free

Bye

Maggie

You too, a pleasure! (TO FREE) *Behave!*

Free

What?

RAM EXITS

Vic

Look at him go, oh oh, watch watch watch... he's going to check all his pockets right when he hits the door, side side chest back pockets, aaand- pat pat pat pat pat, mmmm-mmm- every fucking time!

Free

OK, mom

Vic

***Ok, mom? What's that supposed to mean? And what the hell is your problem? You just feel like being a bitch? This is why we don't hang out, you fucking go out of your way to embarrass me!
Fuck this- Hey Ram, wait up! I'll ride with you ok?***

VIC EXITS.

You're getting the big sendoff, baby!

SOUND OF KAZOOS, LAUGHTER, BAR CROWD GATHERS TO SEE RAM OFF
FREE SIGNS AFTER VIC
(ASL ON SCREEN)

Free

Hey this was really great! Next time, don't call! I'd rather sit at home picking my nose!

MAGGIE TAPS HER

What?

Maggie

I'm not voicing that

Free

Why the hell not?

Maggie

I'm not yelling at your sister in the middle of a bar

Free

No?

Maggie

No

Free

Wussy

Maggie

Bite me

Free

Let's go home

LIGHTS FADE AS MAGGIE AND FREE GET UP TO LEAVE BAR. KAZOOS,
LAUGHTER, NOISE FADE.

Scene 2

LIGHTS UP ON FREE AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT, THEY'RE JUST GETTING HOME, GETTING READY FOR BED, IN MID-DEBATE. THEIR HOME IS QUIET. (THIS SCENE IS IN ASL ONLY, ENGLISH APPEARS ON SCREEN.)

Maggie

I wasn't speaking for you, I was talking about ASL

Free

Well, next time let me talk about ASL

Maggie

I was just... ok fine

Free

It's no big deal, I'm just mentioning it

Maggie

*Ok, whatever, we'll never see him again, it doesn't matter
I didn't realize he was leaving town right away, I feel bad, we should have left so they
could be alone to say goodbye...*

Free

He was not interested in being alone with my sister

Maggie

How do you know?

Free

*I know.
That poem he read is pointless*

Maggie

(LAUGHS) Yeah well, you think all poetry is pointless

Free

You said it's trying to describe love, right?

Maggie

Right...

Free

There's already a perfectly good description of love. Sex.

FREE PULLS MAGGIE CLOSE, THEY LAUGH, KISS. FREE STARTS LAUGHING

Free

I think it's interesting that a hearing professor hates translations too

Maggie

He doesn't hate translations

Free

He said, 'I hate translations'.

Maggie

He didn't mean it literally. He translates all day

Free

Doesn't mean he likes it

Maggie

No, he lives in a state of misery, every time he opens his mouth

Free

OK, you have no sense of humor about this

Maggie

You're not making a joke, you're picking a fight.

Free

What fight? We live in an English world, we'll keep living in an English world, no one's threatening your language. Why can't you just admit that translation is not as good, and stop being so defensive-

Maggie

You're not saying translation is not as good, you're saying translation sucks

Free

Same thing

Maggie

It is not the same thing, and no one is saying that translation is just as good, just that maybe it has its own value, and it's better than nothing

Free

(NOT ON SCREEN) *Blablabla*

Maggie

What?

Free

I've seen this speech before. "This has this kind of value, this has that kind of value," - nothing is absolutely like anything else, but that's ok, let's mix it all up and see what comes out.

Maggie

Whatever. Vic's right, you're in a mood.

Free

Vic is the same as our mother.

Maggie

You don't give her a chance

Free

I know exactly what happens- she falls in love every week, with someone impossible, she's fun, she's a party girl, she'll cry when he doesn't call, make a big tragedy out of it, she's known him one week and he's the love of her life, whatever, I'm bored. Trust me, she's my sister, I know her a lot better than you. Can we finish with this subject?

Maggie

You brought it up.

Free

OK, well I'm done with it.

Maggie

Well I thought it was an interesting evening

Free

Good for you

Maggie

It was fun to do something different, maybe if you were willing to try-

FREE TURNS LIGHTS OUT, CONVERSATION IS CUT OFF

SILENCE. MAGGIE'S LAST WORDS LINGER ON SCREEN. MAGGIE TURNS LIGHT BACK ON.

Free

What?

Maggie

I was talking

Free

Sorry. I didn't see. What were you saying?

BEAT

Maggie

You're tired

Free

That's what you were saying?

Maggie

No, that's what I'm saying now. Let's go to bed.

Free

Fine.

FREE EXITS. MAGGIE TURNS OUT LIGHT AS SHE EXITS.

Scene 3

NIGHT. RAM IS AT HIS COMPUTER. HE IS BACK TO HIS NORMAL SELF, A PRIVATE, LONELY GUY WHO DOESN'T HAVE FLINGS. HE PROOFS AN EMAIL OUT LOUD, IT APPEARS ON SCREEN.

TO: Birju@clubcacophony.com
FROM: Balaram
RE: Visit

Dear cousin,
thanks for hosting my vacation, I had a great time. I'm back to work now, and as dull as I ever was. Your lifestyle is not for me in the long term, though I appreciate your efforts on my behalf.
My regards to all the staff and tell Vic thanks for a memorable week

RAM MAKES A FACE, DELETES BACK TO 'AND'

and Vic. And stop telling my mother stories, or I'll tell your mother about your parties!
Cheers,
Ram

HE SENDS, THINKS A MOMENT, STARTS A NEW EMAIL OUT LOUD

TO: MeenaJoshi@freenet.uk
FROM: Balaram
RE: Visit

Dear Mum, I'm back at work after an exhausting week of relaxing in Birju's company. Tell Auntie my lips are sealed, she will hear none of his secrets from me.
As for Birju's loose lips, no I did NOT meet anyone 'special' while I was there.

(RAM MURMURS 'ASSHOLE')

Professor Masson is beginning research for a new book of Sanskrit love poems translated into English. I am in charge of making the first selections.
Perhaps this summer I might take a week off to come visit.

I love you,
Ram

HE SENDS. SITS. TURNS OFF LIGHT.
BLACKOUT.

BEEP. VIC V/O LEAVING A MESSAGE, CLUB NOISE IN BACKGROUND.
(WORDS ON SCREEN)

Vic

Hey Ram! It's Vic Jones here, miss you, so how's it going--? You know, I think you left something at my apartment- I realized you don't have my number- give me a call, it's- uh- 555..., what?? No, I'm on the phone, asshole- --ok ok! Sorry about that, it's nuts here, so anyway, my number is 555-----

BLACKOUT

Scene 4

LIGHTS UP ON MAGGIE & FREE'S APARTMENT. VIC HAS BEEN DRINKING AND IS HAVING TROUBLE REMEMBERING TO SIGN, SO MAGGIE INTERPRETS.
(ASL NOT ON SCREEN.)

Vic

Fuck you!

Maggie

Vic!

Vic

Vic shit Vic fuck you

Maggie

Vic, I'm just saying that you need to calm down, it's impossible to have a conversation like this

Vic/Maggie

Oh, I need to calm down? You know what, you're a fucking snob! Magg Magg, Magna Cum Laude. Oh wait, let me show you my high school diploma, cuz I got an A in English, you hag!

Free

Maggie. Go.

Maggie

I can stay

Vic/Maggie

Oh no, you go, who needs you? My sister and I communicated just fine before you, during you, and after you

Maggie

I'm staying, we're fine

Free

(TO VIC) *Hey! You sign like shit, and you know it. We never 'communicated' at all before Maggie.*

Maggie

Free...

Vic/Maggie

*I sign a fuckload better than you talk!
Free the Deaf Dyke! That's what they call you at home, the Deaf Dyke!
I'm the only one that comes to see you two. And you never fucking support me! Not once*

Maggie

(We support you)

Vic/Maggie cont.

It's not like he's too good for me! Is that what you think? You think he's too good for me? I should go back to like Jake the asshole?

Free

Wait, wait, wait, you're back with Jake?

Vic

No, I'm not back with Jake! I'm fucking moving on! Cuz you see this? This is our poem! Ram read me this poem the first night we met, and it's a fucking love poem, ok? What the hell do you know anyway-

Free

Stop! Ram is not interested in you. He's not calling you.

Vic

Oh, fuck you, so he hasn't called me, it's been, what, a week? He's busy!

Free

Stop drinking

HURT SILENCE

Vic/Maggie

So why do you get a Professor and I don't, huh? I graduated high school just like you. Better than you. Maggie, did you check her grades before you started fucking her? When she filled out the application... (STARTS LAUGHING) for the damn job...check her transcript? Or maybe the competition wasn't so hot, you're getting older after all and ... whew... it can be tough at those singles mixers when you're interestingly-abled like the two of you... Deaf and Boring walk into a bar...

MAGGIE STOPS INTERPRETING TO INTERRUPT HER

Maggie

Stop it. Why are you doing this?

Vic

I'm making myself feel better

Free

Do you feel better?

Vic/Maggie

I do feel better, thank you Free! I feel free! Free to say whatever I want because, hell, no one listens to me anyway! Freeeee. Freeeeeee. Oh! Funny funny stuff.

Free

Get out...

MAGGIE SHAKES HER HEAD AT FREE TO WAIT FOR VIC TO CALM DOWN.
(THEY HAVE A QUICK EXCHANGE IN ASL, ENGLISH ON SCREEN)

Maggie

She can't drive

Free

Then she can walk, and you can stop interpreting, I don't need to hear her

Maggie

She's just lashing out, she's hurt- you could have a little empathy here

Free

Why? You're taking care of it.

(SCREEN OFF)

Vic

(COLLAPSING ONTO THE COUCH) **I don't feel good**

Free

If you're going to vomit, go to the bathroom

Vic/Maggie

*Fucking men, I wish I was a dyke.
God I feel like shit, I hate this.*

Maggie

Stay put, I'll get you some water, should I make coffee?

Vic/Maggie

I fucking fucked up. I hate this! I hate me!

Free/Maggie

What are you talking about?

Vic/Maggie

Stupid, stupid, I called him from the club and left this dumbass message- "no big deal- hey, I think you left something at my apartment- give me a call..." like a fucking loser...

Free/Maggie

Did he leave something at your apartment?

Vic/Maggie

No. I mean, what am I, twelve? I'm just so tired of this shit, you know? I don't like being alone

Free

Look at me! Maybe you need to be alone

Vic/Maggie

I hate my life. What if I never like my life?

Free

You'll like it better without some asshole hanging around making you miserable

Vic/Maggie

Shit shit shit- Maggie, I want to call him again, ok? Come on, before I lose my nerve, and I want to sound like I'm not a complete asshole-

Free

He doesn't want to talk to you!

Vic/Maggie

Fine, whatever, he doesn't have to call back, right? I just need to call him.

Free

So fuck him. He's a loser

Vic/Maggie

He's not a loser, he's just a nice guy! What, I don't deserve that? Yeah. Just butt out. I want to call him. Maggie, I want to call him!

Maggie

OK. OK. Let's just, hang on- let's get some paper-

FREE IS BEING IGNORED

Free

You don't need me for this, I'm taking a shower

Maggie

All I can advise is honesty. I mean, is that what you want to hear?

Vic

OK

Maggie

OK?

Vic

**I mean, OK, whatever the fuck you say. Really.
Sorry about mouthing off earlier, I was just... you know. Sorry.**

Maggie

*Vic, we love you, you know that. But he doesn't sound like he's...
But that's ok! You can call him, and then you'll have tried.
First things first- you should write it down, so you don't stumble, I do that with
important phone calls. Here.
Ok, so tell me how you feel!*

FREE EXITS, FRUSTRATED

Vic

Nice shrink-voice

Maggie

Vic

Vic

OK, OK, I feel... I want him to come back.

Maggie

You want him to come back, and...?

MAGGIE NOTICES THAT FREE HAS LEFT

Come on.

Vic

**And sweep me off my feet, shit!
He's nice... and he thinks I'm just this... I don't know what, and that pisses me off--**

Maggie

OK. OK, let's keep it simple-

BEEP. CROSSFADE TO RAM LISTENING TO VIC'S VOICE MAIL.
(WORDS ON SCREEN)

Vic (v/o)

Hi Ram! I wasn't totally honest earlier, you didn't leave anything at my apartment except me. I miss you, and I'd like to keep talking to you. I hope you call me. Maybe I'll shoot you an email, and then you'll have my address, if you want it. Ok? Bye.

RAM DELETES THE MESSAGE. "MESSAGE DELETED."
HE SITS AT HIS COMPUTER WORKING.

LIGHTS COME UP SLOWLY ON MAGGIE AND FREE'S APARTMENT. MAGGIE HAS GONE TO BED, VIC IS PASSED OUT ON THE COUCH. FREE CAN'T SLEEP, SHE COVERS VIC WITH A BLANKET, LOOKS AT HER FOR A MOMENT. SHE FINDS THE POEM ON THE FLOOR AND STARTS TO TUCK IT UNDER VIC'S HAND, THEN STOPS AND READS IT. AS SHE READS, THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF RAM'S POEM FROM TOP OF PLAY APPEARS ON THE SCREEN. FREE SIGNS TO HERSELF, MAKING SENSE OF IT.
(ASL NOT ON SCREEN)

Free

*Foolish man- Foolish people... value things, not important, holding on to worthless things is not safe...freedom...what is freedom? Emotion should be valued.
My opinion- naked...love, sex...her dress off...eye contact...I fall...emotions soar-*

SHE READS THE POEM AGAIN. SHE STROKES VIC'S FOREHEAD.
(ASL ON SCREEN)

Beautiful sister. He's a coward.

VIC SLEEPS.

SUDDENLY ANGRY WITH RAM, FREE GRABS HER BLACKBERRY AND
ENTERS HIS EMAIL ADDRESS OFF THE LETTERHEAD.
(EMAIL APPEARS ON SCREEN)

TO: balaram@bostonuniversity.edu
FROM: jonesgirl@peopleinc.com
RE: YOUR POEM

fool
you do not value emotion
you are not free
woman dancing, eyes connect, naked body, heart soars-
this is free

FREE SENDS, FEELS A LITTLE BETTER.
SHE TUCKS THE POEM UNDER VIC'S HAND.
SITS AND THINKS. LONELY.

RAM SEES FREE'S EMAIL.

Ram

Oh, shit...

HER EMAIL AFFECTS HIM, HE TYPES.

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: Balaram
RE: Re. YOUR POEM

You're right. I'm a coward.
I'm not good at relationships with real people, and I've behaved badly. I have
always lacked romantic courage. Except possibly on paper.
Sorry.
Ram

FREE'S BLACKBERRY LIGHTS UP. FREE READS, SURPRISED. SHE FEELS
GUILTY, TYPES.

TO: Balaram
FROM: Jonesgirl

I am sorry. I am rude. your life, your choice.

I like your poem. it describes love well

RAM TYPES

TO: Jonesgirl
FROM: Balaram

I like your version. Very to the point as translations go.

FREE SMILES, TYPES

TO: Balaram
FROM: Jonesgirl

translation sucks, remember?
I like mind meld like star trek for communication ☺

RAM SMILES. TYPES.

TO: Jonesgirl
FROM: Balaram

That would simplify things

LIGHTS FADE
BLACKOUT

PART II

Scene 1

V-O RAM RECITING BHAVABHUTI'S UTTARARAMACARITA, I. 27. SANSKRIT ON SCREEN. FREE IN LONE SPOTLIGHT/STREETLIGHT PERFORMS THE POEM IN ASL.

Scene 1

Ram

Kimapi kimapi mandam mandam asaktiyogad
Aviralitakapolam jalpator akramena
Asithilaparirambhavyaprtaikadosnor
Aviditagatayama rattrir eva vyaramsit

LIGHTS UP ON FREE RECEIVING AN EMAIL ON HER BLACKBERRY, STOPPING TO READ IT. THE EMAIL APPEARS ON SCREEN.

TO: Jonesgirl
FROM: Balaram

Jonesgirl! I gave a talk on this poem this morning, see what you think-

LIGHTS UP ON RAM SPEAKING TO STUDENTS POSITIONED IN THE AUDIENCE. HE IS NOT A NATURALLY CHARISMATIC SPEAKER, BUT DOES HIS BEST TO ENGAGE. THE RESULT IS AWKWARD AND HE LAUGHS AT TOO MANY OF HIS OWN JOKES.

(EMAIL CONT.)

Deep in love
Cheek leaning on cheek we talked
Of whatever came into our minds
Just as it came
Slowly oh
Slowly
With our arms twined
Tightly around us
And the hours passed and we
Did not know it
Still talking when
The night had gone

Deep in love
Cheek leaning on cheek we talked
Of whatever came into our minds
Just as it came
Slowly oh
Slowly
With our arms twined
Tightly around us
And the hours passed and we
Did not know it
Still talking when
The night had gone

Not bad, eh? Now, as the story goes the Not bad, right? I follow up with this

poet Bhavabhuti brought the Uttaramacarita to the great Kalidasa, interrupting him in the middle of a chess game. Not just this piece that I just read you, understand, but the whole Uttaramacarita! You'll have to take my word for it, it's not a quick read. He interrupts Kalidasa in his chess match to recite him this new great work, and recites it from beginning to end with not one interruption from the great master!

anecdote, it's very funny. The poet Bhavabhuti brought the Uttaramacarita to the great Kalidasa, interrupting him in the middle of a chess game. Not just this piece but the whole Uttaramacarita- it's not a quick read! He interrupts Kalidasa in his chess match to recite this new great work, and recites it from beginning to end with not one interruption from the great master!

Unlike today, in those days all things would stop for great art. No warning or preparation, but Kalidas stops his playing instantly to listen. These days we stop for commercials, not for art, eh? Hahah! Art does not flow uninterrupted these days... does it? Does it? No! And there you have another reason to study Sanskrit!

Unlike today, in those days all things would stop for great art. No warning or preparation, but Kalidasa stops his playing instantly to listen! These days we stop for commercials, not for art. Art does not flow uninterrupted these days! See I thought that was funny, but no one laughed.

But to return to my primary point in this possibly apocryphal story. When he finished, Kalidasa leaned forward! He moved one piece on the board, check-mating his opponent. And then he turned to Bhavabhuti and said, "There is but one imperfection in your entire poem. There is one letter 'm' too many!"

Anyway, when he finished, Kalidasa leaned forward. He moved one piece on the board, check-mating his opponent. And then he turned to Bhavabhuti and said, "There is but one imperfection in your entire poem. There is one letter 'm' too many!"

SANSKRIT RETURNS TO SCREEN BRIEFLY BEFORE EMAIL CONTINUES

You see this word? 'Eva'...? It was originally 'Evam' meaning in effect that the lovers spoke and spoke until the night had passed! But with the removal of this one letter- 'm'- the word became 'eva'... 'Aviditagatayama ratrir eva vyaramsit'... and now the lovers spoke and spoke and although night passed they continued to speak. For how long? Perhaps for all eternity? With the removal of one 'm'! One 'm'. This is Sanskrit! So! If you find this fascinating, if you find this

Look at the poem again-you see the word 'Eva'? It was originally 'Evam' which means that the lovers spoke until the night had passed! But take away that 'm' and the word becomes 'eva' And now the lovers spoke and spoke and although night passed they continued to speak. For how long? Perhaps forever? With the removal of one 'm'! One 'm'. This is Sanskrit! I find this fascinating!

'm' here or there fascinating- you should definitely study Sanskrit! And if not, hang on to this photocopy and impress a girl on your next date! Or a boy! It works just as well for the ladies, enjoy it as my gift. I can take any questions now?

I find this 'm' here or there fascinating!
I don't know if they did.
But I told them to keep the photocopy and impress their next date!
What do you think?
R.

RAM SWITCHES TO IM

**No questions?
You're sure?
Well, that's alright, enjoy the rest of your sampler week and I hope to see some of you next semester.
Oh, yes sorry, you in the back?
Yes the cafeteria is across the plaza.
No problem.**

Hello?
Did I put you to sleep?
Half of them were asleep.
The other half were apparently starved and desperate to find the cafeteria.
Hello?

LIGHTS SHIFT, RAM IS HOME, IT'S EVENING. THE EMAILS FLASH UP ON THE SCREEN AS THEY ARE RECEIVED, FADING TO BLACK BEFORE THE NEXT ONE ARRIVES.

**TO: Balaram
FROM: jonesgirl**

I'm here.
good story. but truth is talk stops in morning.
poet was right.

**TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram**

It's an ideal, a beautiful ideal. Why do you think talk stops? Don't you think some people keep talking their whole lives?

**TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl**

not really. life goes on in morning, people get out of bed and have to go. that is the problem. then you are apart all day and when you come home you are different person.

**TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram**

Cynic

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

math
work, sleep, eat. time together is very little.

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

That's a sad thought. What about us?

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

talk at night. apart in day. everything is different.

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

I'll call you tomorrow morning.

LIGHTS FADE UP ON FREE. SHE IS CONFUSED AND DOESN'T RESPOND.

Vic?

FREE DROPS THE BLACKBERRY AND BACKS AWAY FROM IT. HOW THE HELL DID THIS HAPPEN?

Are you there?

FREE CAN'T DECIDE WHETHER TO RESPOND OR CEASE COMMUNICATION.
FINALLY SHE TYPES-

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

why?

FREE WAITS

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

So we can talk.

Cheek to cheek

SCREEN GOES DARK. LIGHTS FADE COMPLETELY ON RAM.
THE DOOR OPENS AND MAGGIE COMES IN. SHE'S LATE.
FREE CONCEALS HER BLACKBERRY, TURNS FRUSTRATION ON MAGGIE
(ASL ON SCREEN)

Free

Where the fuck were you?

Maggie

We got to talking, what are you doing up?

Free

Waiting for you, what do you think?

Maggie

I'm sorry, I thought you'd be asleep

BEAT. FREE STARES AT HER BLACKBERRY, THEN PUTS IT AWAY.

Hey, what's wrong?

Free

Whatever, I don't care, I need to get some sleep

Maggie

It was a really good party, you should have been there! Everyone asked about you

Free

No reason for me to go be bored

Maggie

I think you'd like some of the faculty if you got to know them.

Free

It's not like you ever come out with my friends

Maggie

Twice, I couldn't make it. Twice!

Free

But you're so important, you have to go to a party every weekend

Maggie

You should get out of the house, see more people- maybe then you wouldn't be so crabby all the time

Free

Don't try to psychoanalyze me. I'm crabby because you stayed out until 2am. I'm crabby because I worried about you. I'm crabby because now I haven't slept and I have work in the morning, that's why I'm crabby

Maggie

OK, you're pissed, I'm sorry

Free

Good night.

FREE EXITS. BLACKOUT

Scene 2

TELEPHONE RINGS. LIGHTS UP ON VIC JUST WAKING UP, ANSWERING HER PHONE. (WORDS ON SCREEN)

Vic

H'lo?

LIGHTS UP ON RAM

Ram

Good morning jones-girl

Vic

Hello? Oh shit, I'm late! Who is this?

Ram

It's Ram

Vic

...Ram?? Oh, hey! Hey you! Oh wow

Ram

I'm sorry, you're in a rush

Vic

No, no, what's going on? I'm just, I made a stupid morning hair appointment, but I probably would have missed it anyway, so whatever, right? How are you?

Ram

**I'm fine, I'm just getting ready for class.
Listen, you go to your appointment, I can call again later.**

Vic

Oh, no, no, it's not a big deal

Ram

I have to get ready anyway, same time tomorrow better?

Vic

Yeah? Yeah!

Ram

Have a good day?

Vic

Ok. Bye.

RAM HANGS UP.
VIC IS NUMB FOR A MOMENT, THEN DOES A WILD DANCE.

YES! YESYESYESYESYEEEESSS!!

CROSSFADE TO MAGGIE AND FREE'S BEDROOM THAT EVENING.

Maggie

Yes! Get sleep! Go to sleep! Ok, good night.

MAGGIE HANGS UP THE PHONE, GOES BACK TO CORRECTING PAPERS.
(SCENE IN ASL ONLY, ENGLISH ON SCREEN)

Free

Vic again?

Maggie

She can't sleep. 'Will he call, what if he doesn't call, do I call him, was I supposed to call him, no he said he'd call me...!??' She's so excited.

LONG BEAT. MAGGIE WORKS, FREE MULLS

Free

Do you remember when we first met? We used to talk all the time, I mean non-stop! I loved our hands. I loved the way they moved together. Sexy.

Maggie

Yeah

Free

That night under the streetlight?

Maggie

Our streetlight

STREETLIGHT BEGINS TO GLOW

Free

It was too dark to talk, so finally you just stopped under the streetlight and we were signing, and we just stood there talking and talking trying to finish our conversation, but it never ended, until finally it started snowing and we were too cold to stand there any longer.

Maggie

And then we ran all the way home

Free

Adrenaline!

MAGGIE LAUGHS

I miss that

Maggie

Mm! But also, I loved the way you said things! Maybe I just love Sign. I love the directness... and then it's suddenly so beautiful and poetic that you want to cry because you're not stuck to words, you're just speaking in pure meaning- like poetry. Any image or connection or rhythm works, so long as the truth is told. It's so succinct, and yet so-

Free

(GETS IN BED) *Move over*

Maggie

.. Isn't it an amazing thing, I thought, to walk around in daily life and have your first language be poetry, and not prose! To speak poetry wherever you go! It's like being Shakespeare!

Free

Not really. Being Deaf is not like being Shakespeare.

FREE PICKS UP A MAGAZINE. STREETLIGHT FADES.

Maggie

Hey. I thought we were talking

Free

We were. I've heard this story before, you tell it all the time.

Maggie

*Because we're talking about when we met.
So it's an old story, were you going to tell me something amazing that I've never heard before about when we first met?*

Free

No.

Maggie

Fine. Then why are you attacking me?

Free

I'm not attacking, I'm just not very interested in hearing you say the exact same things that you always say to every person we meet.

Maggie

That happens to be a good memory for me, that's why I tell people that story. And you don't need to try to ruin it for me, just because you're in a mood. You're always in a mood these days.

That was a revelation for me. Meeting you was a revelation. The sign we used in my family for my sister was stilted and clumsy and the signing world you showed me was--

Free

I know all this. I've heard it before. It's great.

Maggie

Oh, ok, screw off.

BEAT

Free

I want you to stop encouraging Vic with this Ram guy. You know he's not really interested in her.

Maggie

So then why did he call her this morning?

Free

Who knows what he wants.

Maggie

Maybe a girlfriend?

Free

He's just being polite or something. He'll get bored and stop calling her, and she'll move on to the next guy

Maggie

Why won't you let her grow?

Free

This guy doesn't want her! This is how you want to teach her self-respect? By helping her chase some guy around?

Maggie

Everyone should be allowed to change, to create themselves.

Free, cont.

..by teaching her to be like you?

Maggie

*Oh please, I helped her leave a voicemail, I listened.
Even if he doesn't last, what she's doing is powerful, she's taking charge of her own life*

Free

And you're God

Maggie

(MAGGIE STARTS SPEAKING AS SHE SIGNS, UPSET) *And I'm what??*

Free

You're molding her to be like you. But she's not one of your students paying you to make them more like you.

Maggie

*Who do I mold to be like me? Who? Are you serious? Do you seriously think that?
About me? I want to mold people?*

Free

You're talking

Maggie

What??

Free

You're talking. When you get upset, you speak. English. Your signing goes to hell. You can't speak 2 languages at once. You know that.

FREE RECEIVES AN IM, LEAVES THE BEDROOM TO CHECK HER BLACKBERRY. IM ON SCREEN.

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

It was nice hearing your voice this morning. Sorry I woke you up.

Vic?

FREE HESITATES, GLANCES BACK AT MAGGIE WHO TURNS OFF LIGHT AND GOES TO BED.

Free

Shit. Shit shit shit shit shit shit!

FINALLY FREE TYPES BACK.

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

I can't sleep

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

Me neither. Why can't you sleep?

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

too many words in my head, shoving, moving everything around

FREE SITS ON COUCH WITH BLACKBERRY CLOSE FOR COMFORT.
LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE LEAVING ONLY SCREEN.

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

What words?

BLACKOUT

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

like bumps on a road, tripping, bumping, can't relax.
you?

BLACKOUT

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

Words that rhyme, I get in a rut: old, fold, cold, sold, mold, told, drives me crazy.
Blablabla.
Solitaire helps. That usually flushes the words out.

BLACKOUT

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

funny, I'll try it
good night

BLACKOUT

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

Good night

BLACKOUT

Scene 3

LIGHTS UP ON VIC AND MAGGIE IN THE APARTMENT. MAGGIE IS SEARCHING FOR A BOOK. FREE ENTERS. (ASL NOT ON SCREEN)

Maggie

There's this one poem I've loved since I was like twelve. It's called 'When You Are Old'. -Aha! got it!

Vic

You were reading poetry when you were 12? OK, I'm screwed!

VIC SEES FREE

Free, I'm screwed! Maggie's been reading poetry since she was 12, I'll never catch up!

Maggie

Hey sweetie!

Oh no, this particular poem was on a Twilight Zone episode, and I was hooked on the Twilight Zone! So my dad gave me this book of poetry so I wouldn't just watch TV all day, and I'd have some form of literary enlightenment. I wasn't that much of a nerd! I think back then I was reading Nancy Drew.

-What's up?

Vic

I read Nancy Drew!

Free

Hi

Maggie

Yeah?

Vic

Yeah!

AAAH! I liiiiiike poetry!!!! I do! I loooove poetry!!!

Maggie

Yes! A convert! So what's Ram working on now?

Vic

Ok, I feel stupid, we don't have to talk about my shit, I'm just- he calls me. Like every morning almost, it's- I don't know. I'll shut up, you talk more. I'm going crazy, it's like I can't shut up about it- AAAAH!

Maggie

This is so exciting!

Vic

Ok, I want to see your poem!

Maggie

OK, my poem-

Vic

Gimme gimme! I need to read some more poetry, you know? Familiarize myself with the 'Genr'ah!" Right Free?

Free

Sure

Maggie

You know, that's the amazing thing about poetry, to me. It's immortal, it speaks directly to the soul, words keep resonating, I read them, you read them, it connects us to the past to the future. Free doesn't always understand my passion for the written word...

Free

Nope

Maggie

It's not her thing. Here it is- It's the one about growing old, you know it Free-

Free

I need to change

FREE EXITS ABRUPTLY. MAGGIE IS VISIBLY HURT.
BEAT

Vic

Sorry

Maggie

**What? Oh! No, it's *not you*, we're having some sort of... things are a bit off lately.
Free *doesn't like poetry. Which is my job, so bummer, right?*
Here, why don't you read it, maybe I'll start some tea or something...**

BEAT. VIC ABRUPTLY CHANGES THE SUBJECT.

Vic

Hey, did Free ever tell you how she saved my life?

Maggie

What?

FREE RE-ENTERS, VIC CATCHES HER ATTENTION.

Vic

Hey Free, *remember Mom's hike?*

Free

What?

Maggie

Are you tired?

FREE SHRUGS

Vic

No seriously, *Mom's fucking hike, remember?*

Free

Mom didn't hike

Vic

When we lived near that campground

FREE IS BLANK, THEN IT DAWNS ON HER

Free

Oh right, the campground by the freeway

Vic

Right! And there was all this undeveloped land behind it! So, Magg, mom decides a fucking wilderness walk would be a good idea, right? And she wakes us all up at some dark-ass hour. None of us have ever hiked before!

Free

I remember...

Vic

And mom's all worried about Free- What if we lose Free! She had some crazy system so that someone can always see Free, like she has to always walk in the middle-

Free/Vic

That's right, we're walking in a line, and someone yells- 'Free's here!' like every few minutes!

Maggie

Funny!

Free

I can't believe you remember this

Vic

The place is so flat that we can't lose Free if we try, We can see the-

Free/Vic

Holiday Inn across the freeway!

Maggie

I love your mom...

Vic

Oh no no, wait, that's not the good part! I'm walking along, and suddenly Free shoves me down, and grabs this snake out of nowhere by like the neck, and throws it off into the bushes!

Free

That's right!

Vic

So I start screaming

Free

You were like AAAAH

Vic

The boys are screaming! Mom's screaming! Free's completely silent. We're all running to get back through the campground and the fuck out of there!

Free

We woke up everyone in the campground

Vic

Mom's yelling 'Frida! Frida! Did it bite you? Did it bite you?' We get to the camp office, and they've got this chart on the wall

Free

Snake chart, from the department of wildlife or something

Vic

Free identifies the snake, and sure enough it's poisonous!

Maggie

Oh my god, then what?

Vic

Emergency room! Three towns away, all of us in the old white van, fucking nightmare, mom's crying the whole way!

Free

I was fine

Vic

Yeah, Free was fine, not a mark on her, totally chill, snake handling? Whatever!

Maggie

Wow! (TO FREE) How come you never told me that story?

Free

It was no big deal. If it hadn't been poisonous, I would have snuck it in her backpack, scared the crap out of her

Vic

Bitch! Wait, you knew it was poisonous? Before we went out that day

Free

Rattlesnake, sure, there was a chart in the camping office

Maggie

Free notices things like charts in camping offices.

Vic

Holy shit, you saved my life! Big, brave, big sister!! You've always got my back!

Free

Yeah yeah yeah, you're welcome

Vic

OK, that's it! I should go! You guys need your *alone time*, and I need my beauty sleep so I can be fresh when *Ram calls in the morning!* So we can *talk, and talk, and talk*

FREE IS GETTING TENSE AGAIN

Maggie

Do you ever call him

Vic

*No. I like that he calls me. It's nice, you know I think that was *the problem* at first was me calling him, he's an old fashioned kind of guy*

Free

Don't get too attached.

BEAT

Vic

What?

Maggie

Free! Why shouldn't she get attached?

Free

It's not real, it's just talk. Just don't get attached, I don't want you to get hurt again.

Vic

You don't want to see me hurt?

Oh...ok.

Then you should *shut up* then, shouldn't you?

SILENCE.

Maggie

Vic...

VIC GATHERS HER THINGS AND LEAVES.

(ASL ON SCREEN)

Maggie

That wasn't nice

Free

It's true, she's got a shitty track record

SILENCE

Maggie

Do you want to go camping this weekend?

Free

No, I need to figure some stuff out.

Maggie

Fine

FREE NEEDS TO GET IT OFF HER CHEST

Free

It's stupid, I sent this guy this email, and he got confused and thinks I'm someone else, and now I have to fix the confusion, it's a mess. Busy weekend.

Maggie

Fine

BLACKOUT

Scene 4

LIGHTS UP ON RAM TYPING. WORDS APPEAR ON SCREEN.

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

I had a strange dream

RAM GETS A GLASS OF MILK, WAITS, NOTHING. HE GETS A NEWSPAPER,
STOPS, CHECKS, NOTHING. WAITS.

LIGHTS UP ON FREE. SHE DOESN'T WANT TO WRITE BACK, BUT CAN'T
THINK OF A WAY OUT. FINALLY SHE TYPES

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

hi

RAM PERKS UP

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

Hi there. I was getting worried.

It was the strangest thing, everything that happened in my dream, I was typing it. Every word, every gesture. It was fun at first, but then suddenly it became hard to keep up. The letters were shifting on the keys, there was this clackety-clacking like those old typewriters rushing me, I started to panic, hyper-ventilate... I woke up in a cold sweat. What do you think of that?

SCREEN BLACK

Do you write to me in your dreams?

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

no

SHE TRIES TO HOLD BACK, BUT CAN'T RESIST GETTING DRAWN IN

I dream about my hands

TO: jonesgirl

FROM: balaram

Explain

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

lift your hands from the keyboard

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

OK

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

stop typing
lift them up. only pretend typing in the air. look at your hands. hands like snow.
like silent music. you see it?

FOR A MOMENT BOTH THEIR HANDS ARE SIGNING SNOW MUSIC. PIANO
EMERGES, THEN FADES. AFTER A MOMENT FREE TYPES.

now there is no rush

RAM IS MOVED, HE STARTS TO TYPE SOMETHING, BUT HESITATES.
FREE SHAKES OFF THE MOMENT, MAKES HER DECISION, TYPES.

I've decided we should stop.
we need to see real people.

RAM TYPES

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

We are real.

FREE TYPES

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

this is not real. just words.
like your poems. they talk, but they are not real.

time to move on

RAM TYPES

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

For me, words are real.
This is real.

BEAT. FREE IS TORN.

Vic?

FREE PULLS HERSELF TOGETHER TO END IT, TYPES

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

not for me

BLACKOUT

-OPTIONAL INTERMISSION-

Part III

Scene 1

FROM 15TH CENTURY ANTHOLOGY COMPILED BY KASHMIRIAN SRIVARA.
ON SCREEN IN SANSKRIT.
FREE IN LONE SPOTLIGHT/STREETLIGHT RECITES IN ASL

Ram (v-o)

Jaye dharitryah puram eva saram
Pure grham sadmani caikadesah
Tatrapī sayya sayane varastri
Ratnojjvala rajyasukhasya saram

LIGHTS UP. VIC AND MAGGIE ARE ON THE PHONE, MAGGIE SIGNS THE
CONVERSATION TO FREE, RAM WAITS FOR VIC IN BED.

Vic

He came to read me a poem

Maggie

(TO FREE) *He flew all the way here to read her a poem.*
(TO VIC) *I'm sure that's it, call me later*

Vic/Maggie

Ok. Love you.

Maggie

I'm so happy for her!

Free

I'm going to bed

Maggie

They remind me of us! Let's be romantic, let's talk all night, get stupid and exhausted-

Free

Not tonight, ok?

FREE EXITS.

THE FOLLOWING SCENE BETWEEN VIC AND RAM MAY BE MADE ACCESSIBLE USING THE SCREEN, OR MAY BE INTERPRETED INTO ASL BY MAGGIE. IF YOU CHOOSE ASL ACCESS, THE ITALICIZED STAGE DIRECTIONS APPLY. IF NOT, DISREGARD THEM.

FRUSTRATED, MAGGIE GRABS HER COAT AND HEADS OUT. SHE ARRIVES UNDER THE STREETLIGHT DURING RAM'S POEM.

VIC JOINS RAM IN BED AS HE READS FROM A PIECE OF PAPER. THE POEM IS ON SCREEN IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Ram

**Conquering the whole earth
As I have done
The essence of it is one
City
In that city one house
In that house only one
Room
And even there one bed
In that bed the woman above all others
The essence of the kingdom's happiness
Shining like a jewel**

STANDING IN THE STREETLIGHT, MAGGIE INTERPRETS THE FOLLOWING SCENE INTO ASL.

Vic

Mmm

Ram

Professor Masson is working with this poet, Bill Merwin- it's good isn't it? I'm involved in the actual translating now, can you believe it? So Bill, the poet, brought me this piece at the office. He was picking something up, and just stopped to talk, just stopped. I don't know him well, but he knows I'm on the project, so he asked my opinion. So I read it right there on the spot. Twice.

Vic

I still can't believe you're here...

Ram

I can't either. I never thought of myself as spontaneous.

Vic

**Surprise!
So what did you say? About the poem?**

Ram

I said 'Pardon me, Bill, but I must catch a plane!'

Vic

You did not!

Ram

**No. I said 'it's fantastic.'
And then I told him I must catch a plane, and I came here to you.
I read it and I knew I had to come.
Listen, this is real. We are real.**

Vic

I know

Ram

It was as though he walked into my office and answered a question that I had been asking without even knowing I was asking it. He's such a sweet old gentleman, he didn't even wonder where I was rushing off to, just told me to keep this in case I thought of any suggestions for him. Suggestions! I don't imagine I could tell him anything, he's a poet!

Vic

But you're the Sanskrit expert

Ram

That's why he asked me, of course.

But I really feel that he captured something here. Maybe not the exact thing, but something that I at least find beautiful. Surprisingly beautiful.

Vic

And you're pretty choosy

Ram

I can't say of course if anyone else would care for it. A person who doesn't know the original poem, may have no interest. That's the fear isn't it, you translate something and what if people read it and think, oh, how dull Sanskrit poetry is, how silly, how overdone. And then all you have accomplished is to condemn it to further obscurity for fools like me to labor over. Alone.

Vic

I like it.

Ram

Yes?

Vic

I love it.

Ram

I'm glad. But then you're Vic. You're unique.

**LIGHTS FADE ON VIC AND RAM.
*STREETLIGHT FADES ON MAGGIE.***

Scene 2

SCREEN ONLY IN BLACKOUT

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

Good evening

LIGHTS FADE UP GRADUALLY ON MAGGIE READING A BOOK AND RAM WAITING AT HIS COMPUTER. FREE READS HER BLACKBERRY SCREEN. CLEARLY IT'S NOT OVER BETWEEN RAM AND HER/VIC AS SHE HAD HOPED. SHE WANTS TO KICK SOMETHING, INSTEAD PUNCHES 2 KEYS, SENDS

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

hi

RAM PAUSES

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

I want to kiss everyone I see, is that normal?

FREE PUNCHES 2 MORE KEYS

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

no

BEAT. RAM IS AT A LOSS

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

Say something

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

don't know what

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

Are you tired?

HE TRIES TO DRAW HER IN

What's your favorite breakfast?

FREE PRETENDS TO BE VIC, ISN'T HAPPY ABOUT IT

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

gin

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

Favorite piece of clothing?

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

tall black boots

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

Most romantic thing?

FREE LOOKS AT MAGGIE, SLIPS INTO TRUTH

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

streetlight

RAM'S TRUTH

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

A computer screen

BEAT. FREE NEEDS TO GET OUT.

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

I should go to bed

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

OK. Something is wrong.

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

no. I'm tired. good night

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

Good night

SCREEN BLACK. FREE LOOKS AT MAGGIE. MAGGIE GLANCES UP.
(ASL ON SCREEN)

Maggie

What?

Free

Nothing. I love you.

MAGGIE SMILES.
SOUND OF A TELEPHONE, LIGHTS SHIFT TO VIC'S APARTMENT, VIC PICKS
UP THE PHONE. LIGHTS UP ON RAM, LOOKING A LITTLE PANICKED.
(WORDS ON SCREEN)

Ram

Are you ok?

Vic

(LAUGHS) **Of course I am!**

Ram

Yeah? Alright. I was worried about you.

Vic

Silly! You sound tired, what's up?

Ram

Vic, I need your word on something. Don't let me scare you away.

Vic

Don't flatter yourself, baby, I don't scare easy

Ram

I mean it. Don't let me scare you away. If I'm saying all the wrong things, stop me. Tell me how to say it right, but don't change your mind about me. This is so important. If I weren't so awkward... This is so important to me. I've never felt this way about anyone else- and-

Vic

You're nervous too. Oh, thank fucking god, you're nervous too! I thought it was just me!

Ram

Are you joking? You're killing me!

Vic

Well, it's mutual

Ram

Well, good

Vic

Good

Ram

So we'll be nervous together? Deal?

Vic

Hell yeah!

Ram

OK! I'll see you this weekend.

Vic

Seriously? What do they pay you Sanskrit professors?

Ram

Not enough, I'm going broke. Oh, talking is good. I miss you.

Vic

You could just move here

Ram

Don't tempt me.

I wait for you at night. I wait for you to be sleepless too, to answer me, I can't sleep until after we talk. That's our true selves, isn't it.

Our true secret selves.

BEAT. VIC PROCESSES.

Vic

(NOT ON SCREEN) **Mmm**

Ram, cont.

And I need rest, I need to sleep! God midterms are next week! Have you any idea? I need to be there with you. In the same room as you. Not a computer screen away...

Vic

(NOT ON SCREEN) **Yeah...**

LIGHTS FADE
BLACKOUT

Scene 3

BANGING IN THE DARK. LIGHTS UP ON FREE AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT,
VIC BURSTS IN.

Vic

What the fuck, Maggie? I trusted you!

Maggie

Vic?

Free

Oh great, is she drunk again?

Vic

No! No! Look at me, Free!! Both of you, look at me very closely. I am not drunk. I am very very angry.

Maggie

Ok. About?

Vic

Ram called tonight

Maggie

That's great!

Vic

Yeah, great. It's great, you're great we're all great! I'm not getting into it with you right now, so all I have to say to you is don't you ever Fucking email him again!

Maggie

Ok. What?

Vic

What? What? Oh, huh, what????

See I thought we were friends, *I told you fucking everything*, and I thought you maybe didn't *think I'm a complete asshole*, I actually am that *stupid*. But going behind my back... *That's fucking low*. And really could have *screwed shit up*. So don't call, don't email, whatever.

Maggie

What are you talking about?

Free

You should go.

Vic

Oh, that's great, *Free*, always blame me, right? *Princess Perfect* can't do anything wrong! You know she went *behind your back too*. Have you been getting laid lately? *Because Ram sure has*. (TO MAGGIE) Except that *he thought it was me!* That's who he was picturing! And I'm sorry, but *flesh and blood trumps nighttime chitchat* any fucking day of the week!

Maggie

Someone's been emailing Ram?

Vic

You! How many nights now? Huh? You know, who gives a shit.

Maggie

I didn't.

Vic

Oh, shut the fuck up...!

Free

Sorry.

THEY GLANCE AT HER

Maggie

You're sorry about what, sweetie?

Free

Sorry, my screw up. I fucked up.

Maggie

With what?

BEAT. VIC REALIZES.

Vic

Oh no no no no fucking way

FREE TRIES TO DISMISS IT

Free

It was an accident, he misunderstood, you know my English sucks

Vic

Your English sucks? That's seriously your excuse? This is fucking low. I mean, what the fuck, Free? Do you hate me?

Free

No! It was an accident- the guy got confused...

Maggie

Stop! What are you two talking about? Vic?

Vic

(TO FREE) Well. Shit. My Deaf lesbian sister seduced my boyfriend. That's never happened before.

Maggie

What?

Free

It's just emails, it's no big deal

Vic

Just emails?? Not a big deal that you're going behind my back with my boyfriend? No big deal that you're in love with my boyfriend?

Free

I'm not in love with him! It was just words, late at night, just talk. I couldn't sleep.

Vic

So talk to Maggie! That's what she's here for. You've already got your lover. Why don't you talk to her? Huh?

SILENCE

Maggie?

SILENCE

***Hell, aren't you a dyke? You don't even like Ram!
Just, don't do anything. Just don't! He's happy. I'm happy. Leave us alone. Leave us the fuck alone.***

VIC EXITS. MAGGIE IS STUNNED, STARTS TO EXIT.
(DIALOGUE IN ASL ONLY, ENGLISH ON SCREEN)

Free

Wait.

Maggie

No

Free

Stay. Let's talk. This was no big deal. It was an accident. It was no big deal.

Maggie

Not now

Free

*Come on, it was an accident. Let's talk! We always talk about whatever is wrong...
That's us, communication, otherwise we fall apart.*

Maggie

No. That's me. Communication. Have you been talking to me, Free? Really? Have you?

MAGGIE EXITS.

FREE, ANGRY, SIGNS TO HERSELF AND THE WORLD.

Free

*I have to talk to someone, don't I? Don't I?
Where the hell are you?
Fuck!*

BLACKOUT

Scene 4

LIGHTS UP ON VIC'S APARTMENT.
RAM IS HAPPY, VIC IS ALTERNATELY CLINGY AND PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE
MAGGIE INTERPRETS UNDER THE STREETLIGHT

Vic

Don't go

Ram

I have to. Actually, I'm excited.

Vic

Hey!

Ram

I am. I'm excited about work. I'm excited about everything.

Vic

Huh

Ram

What?

Vic

Well, I think that might be the first unromantic thing you've said to me all weekend

Ram

No it's not

Vic

What do you mean it's not? How is it not?

Ram

You're the reason I'm excited!

Vic

About leaving

Ram

I'm not leaving.

Vic

Then what?

Ram

I'm... continuing!

Vic

Continuing??

Ram

Continuing!

Vic

That's... Ok, what are you continuing? Continuing like... along your way?

Ram

What do you mean?

Vic

Well, I mean, it's not like I haven't seen people continuing before. Continuing right out of my life.

Ram

Nononononono, that's leaving. I'm not leaving, I'm continuing.

Vic

Stop being so...! What's the fu--, -the difference?

Ram

Continuing implies... implies the continuation of something

Vic

Oh, ok, thanks

Ram

No, listen. Continuing implies togetherness, not separation

Vic

According to you

Ram

According to me

Vic

Ok, so in the dictionary of Ram, what is getting on a plane and flying to another state?

Ram

That's geography

Vic

That's bull

Ram

That's crass

Vic

So is that why you're leaving? Because I'm crass?

Ram

Vic, come on. Are you serious?

Vic

Of course I'm serious! God! Aren't you listening to me?

Ram

Really?

Vic

Hell, I don't know. Serious about what? See? I don't even know what we're talking about. I'm dumb.

Ram

I can't leave you.

Vic

People do. Plenty do. Two husbands did, and without looking back

Ram

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have joked, I didn't think about that

Vic

You were joking?

Ram

Well no, but I was being flippant

Vic

Well, quit it! You know, girls need reassurance too

Ram

Alright wait

Vic

No, I'm just saying, I don't need it right now

Ram

Victoria. Quiet.

Vic

Victoria? Oh, no no, no one calls me that

Ram

Victoria? It suits you. You're strong and regal

Vic

Shut up

Ram

No, that's not true. You're warm. You're the warmest person I know. With depths that only I have seen. I think. Don't disillusion me if I'm wrong. I like to pretend you're my secret. That no other man has ever known you this way

Vic

Jealous much?

Ram

Absolutely. It's an Indian thing. We like our women untouched.

Vic

Well then you shouldn't touch them.

Ram

Why don't you like Victoria?

Vic

No one calls me that

Ram

Why not? It's your name.

Vic

I'm not very virginal.

Ram

What does that have to do with the price of eggs?

VIC PUTS HER CARDS ON THE TABLE, DARES HIM TO LEAVE HER

Vic

First boy I had sex with, Brett, tells me afterwards that I can't call myself Victoria anymore because she was the virgin queen and I don't qualify now. Then he told all the other guys, and they changed my name to Vic. Did I mention I was fourteen? Fourteen and no longer Victoria. How does your Indian-ness feel about that?

Ram

I don't like him. Did you like him?

Vic

Loved him madly. Why?

Ram

He's an ass

Vic

Strong language, mr professor man

Ram

Victoria wasn't the virgin queen, that was Elizabeth.

BEAT

Vic

No shit?

Ram

No shit.

Vic

Asshole! Wait, weren't they both virgins?

Ram

It is generally assumed that Victoria's marriage was consummated.

Vic

What an asshole!

Ram

Completely undeserving of Victoria.

Vic

Yeah, well. Victoria was bored and 'something had to give'. And then there was Vic.

Ram

Do you like Vic?

Vic

Not really. That's what they call victims on crime shows.

FEELING STUPID, SHE CONTINUES TO PUSH HIM

Not that you watch TV... I really like TV, you should know that!

Ram

Why do you think I don't watch TV?

Vic

Maggie and Free don't even own a TV

Ram

Well, unlike your somewhat abrasive sister who doesn't like me, I watch TV

Vic

Really?

Ram

I'm Indian, we have a passionate relationship with mindless entertainment! I'll have to take you to a Bollywood film some time. Good guys, bad guys, romance, singing, the whole bit.

Vic

Dork

Ram

That's what I'm telling you. So what's this crime show that you watch?

Vic

There's like a million Law and Order's, but I like the CSI shows

Ram

I will begin watching as soon as I get home.

HE'S BROKEN THROUGH

Vic

Familiarize yourself with the genre?

Ram

Absolutely. I can find out about all those other lesser Vics.

Vic

You know what, you're right. I never liked Vic. Vic has sex with pimply Brett and marries any asshole who proposes and Vic is drunk and pathetic. Fuck Vic.

Ram

Excellent. Victoria. I love you

Vic

Yeah?

Ram

And I'm not leaving, I'm continuing, because you're a part of me now and I have to go to work and then I have to come back and that's how we continue on. Together. You'll see. We won't stop talking, I promise. You'll see.

Vic

Ok.

Ram

Besides, it'll be fun.

Vic

How will it be fun, you lunatic?

Ram

Writing to each other again, lamplight and the tapping of a keyboard, I don't know how I ever survived without you...

VIC MOVES AROUND, CHANGES THE SUBJECT

Vic

Did you check around, make sure you didn't leave anything?

Ram

Like the first time?

Vic

Haha. Funny funny man, that's what I fell for, you know, that wacky sense of humor

Ram

Really?

Vic

Get real. I'll look, mom trained us well, I can spot a sock behind the radiator of a cheap motel room better than anyone. Never leave anything behind- no kids no luggage- that was her motto- like the marines only not- cuz marines do leave shit behind, like me for example

KISSES HER

Ram

Is this real enough for you.

Vic

Yes. But you have to call me.

Ram

I will

Vic

In the evening. Mornings are nice, but I like hearing your voice before I go to sleep. I sleep better.

Ram

It's a deal.

Vic

**Alright. OK.
I'm done here.
Continue**

Ram

Your majesty

**LIGHTS FADE
BLACKOUT
ON SCREEN**

**To: Jonesgirl
From: Balaram**

Good evening, Victoria.

LIGHTS UP ON FREE AND MAGGIE'S APARTMENT. FREE CHECKS HER BLACKBERRY, MAGGIE READS THE SCREEN OVER FREE'S SHOULDER. (ASL ON SCREEN)

Free

You don't have to watch me, I won't email him back.

To: Jonesgirl
From: Balaram

Are you there?

THEY BOTH READ, MAGGIE SIGNS

Maggie

If you screw this up for Vic I will not forgive you.

Free

It was screwed up from the beginning. It was an accident.

Maggie

Stay out of it. They're making it work.

To: Jonesgirl
From: Balaram

Vic?

FREE PUTS ASIDE THE BLACKBERRY, TURNS TO MAGGIE

Free

Can we talk?

Maggie

No

SCREEN GOES DARK. MAGGIE EXITS.

LIGHTS FADE ON FREE.
TELEPHONE RINGS. LIGHTS UP ON VIC AT THE CLUB. SHE'S BEEN WAITING FOR THIS CALL, SHE BRACES HERSELF, ANSWERS HER CELLPHONE.
LIGHTS UP ON RAM. THE CLUB IS NOISY, SO THEY HAVE TO YELL.
(WORDS ON SCREEN)

Vic

Hey baby! I'm so glad you called, the apartment was so lonely after you left I had to get out!

Ram

I wondered where you were, you didn't answer...

Vic

How was your flight?

Ram

Fine

Vic

What's happening tomorrow?

Ram

Isn't that the universal question

Vic

What?

Ram

I don't know. Actually, I don't care, that's more accurate.

Vic

Ram? What's wrong, sweetie? (DID YOU FIGURE OUT THAT I'M LYING?)

Ram

Nothing. I'm hyperventilating.

Vic

Well, quit it. Do you have a paper bag?

Ram

Trust you to not take me too seriously. I love you, you know that Vic?

Vic

I love you

Ram

Ok, good. Then lets get married.

Vic

What?

Ram

I had a moment here, tonight. I thought I might not get to talk to you. And now I'm hyperventilating, it's ridiculous! So that settles it then. Please marry me.

-

Hello?

Vic

Yes.

Ram

Promise?

Vic

YES!

BLACKOUT

PART IV

Scene 1

RAM'S VO IN DARK. SANSKRIT ON SCREEN. POOL OF LIGHT ON RAM AND VIC EMBRACING

Loo jurai, jurau!
Vaanijjam hoi, hou tam nama
Ehi! Nimajjasu pase,
Pupphavai! Na ei me nidda

LIGHTS UP ON MAGGIE INTERPRETING UNDER THE STREETLIGHT
RAM AND VIC IN BED

Ram

Now translated-

Some will always be
Unhappy
Let them
And some will
Blame us
Let them
Alright you're having
your period
come and lie beside me
anyway
I can't sleep without you

There.

Vic

I think that's romantic!

Ram

Most people laugh-

Vic

Oh whatever, most people are idiots. I love that!

Ram

I do too!

It's in Prakrit, which is like a working class Sanskrit, not as refined, but this is part of who we are, yes? It shows a side of ancient India that westerners don't see, the Hindus were a very sexual people, and so often the eastern people are seen as uptight and puritanical when in fact it is the Americans who are puritanical. Who deride a woman for her sexuality instead of celebrating it

Vic

**It's brilliant! It's like- 'Hey honey I'm on the rag, I can't,' and he's like 'I don't care, I just wanted to cuddle' (RAM STARTS TO LAUGH)
What's funny? Is that not what it's saying?**

Ram

No, that's exactly what it's saying

VIC JUMPS ON RAM

Vic

Then what's funny, mr. man?

Ram

Nothing, you're exactly right. It's just, I've always had a sort of adolescent response to that phrase-

Vic

**What? On the rag?
What's wrong with it? 'On the rag... on the rag...' it's true-**

Ram

Oh, certainly, accuracy is paramount in these matters

Vic

Well yeah, I suppose it sounds all beautiful and flowery in Sanskrit- 'On the raagaah'-

RAM LOSES IT, HE'S FALLING OVER LAUGHING

Ram

-Oh my god!

Vic

Raga? Did I get it? Is that right? Raga!

Ram

Oh no no no no, stop, stop

Vic

What? Was I close?

Ram

No! No more Sanskrit from you, I beg of you!

HE TRIES TO ROLL AWAY FROM HER, AND SHE ROLLS WITH HIM,
NEEDLING HIM

Vic

**So how do you say it? That's what I'm calling it if you won't tell me.
Sorry honey, I can't, I'm on the 'raga'**

Ram

You're killing me!

Vic

Tell me what it means! Tell me! Raga, raga, what does it mean-

Ram

**Ok, Ok! Stop, stop, no more. Stop.
Song. It means song.**

SOMETHING PASSES BETWEEN THEM, HE STROKES HER HAIR.
MAGGIE LEAVES THE STREETLIGHT, FINDS HER YEATS BOOK, SITS, OPENS IT.

Raga

Vic

Song

LIGHTS FADE ON VIC AND RAM. YEATS POEM APPEARS ON SCREEN,
MAGGIE MURMURS A FEW LINES QUIETLY. FREE WATCHES HER.

Maggie

**When you are old and gray and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;**

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face among a crowd of stars.

FREE APPROACHES, MAGGIE SHUTS THE BOOK
(POEM DISAPPEARS, ASL ON SCREEN)

Free

What are you reading?

Maggie

Just a poem

BEAT

Free

Vic is happy

Maggie

You think someone should thank you for that?

Free

Look, Vic has forgiven me, so why can't you?

Maggie

Vic hasn't forgiven you, she wants you at the wedding so she can keep an eye on you. She doesn't trust you.

BEAT

Free

There's nothing to be jealous of. There was nothing between us, just words.

Maggie

I'm not jealous, Free. I'm just not ready to talk to you.

Free

Fine. You're not jealous. So tell me why you're mad.

Maggie

Why am I mad? You walk around with a chip on your shoulder for months, making me feel like I'm doing something wrong, then you take your bitchiness out on your sister, lie to the man she loves on email, and you can ask me why I'm mad?

Free

And that's it? You're not at all worried that maybe I have feelings for someone else? That maybe I'm in love with someone else?

Maggie

No! Through email? What is wrong with you?

Free

Pay attention to me!!

Maggie

I am and you're not making sense!!

Free

Then you're not listening!

BEAT

Maggie

Fine. Then try again. Try very hard to explain this so it makes sense to me, because I do not understand you.

Free

Maybe you can't understand me anymore. Maybe we don't speak the same language.

Maggie

What?

Free

Ok.

We were talking.

Remember that?

And then you started talking to someone else, in English. Not just someone else, lots of other people, and the conversation went on and on, and things changed as a result of this conversation, your work, your world, your life. And sometimes you talked to me too, but not as much, and this other conversation was so busy there was no time for other things, but I was still here, so that was ok.

But while you changed and moved and became all these new people, I waited. You see? I waited in the other language, the second language, for you to come back so we could continue. Continue our conversation. But you didn't. You went on and thought that I should keep up. But I can't keep up. I was waiting, and trying really hard not to change, so that when you returned we could...continue... But you didn't.

And then you were having your new conversation with my sister. You never used to be able to talk to my sister, that's how much you changed! And that's when I could see it! How far you'd gone without me. Or with the old me, while I did nothing. Nothing with my life!

So I needed to have a conversation. Ok? I needed to talk, and suddenly there it was, a conversation for me. As I am now, that I can have! So I did it.

Because you're not here anymore.

SILENCE.

MAGGIE STRUGGLES TO RE-ORIENT HERSELF

Maggie

Is that so bad...? That I talk to Vic...?

Free

*No! None of it is bad. It's just gone.
Did I say it better? This time? Do you understand?*

THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER
LIGHTS FADE
BLACKOUT

Scene 2

LIGHTS UP ON FREE GOING TO BED ON THE COUCH. SHE LIES AWAKE FOR THE DURATION OF THIS SCENE.

SOUND OF TELEPHONE RINGING. LIGHTS UP ON RAM IN A HOTEL ROOM ON THE PHONE, BOOTING UP HIS LAPTOP. LIGHTS UP ON VIC ANSWERING THE PHONE.

(WORDS ON SCREEN)

Ram

Victoria? I'm in a hotel! No, I'm not drunk, but I think I have to stay here. I strongly suspect my cousins have posted a guard. They're apparently superstitious about weddings, but at least I think I persuaded them to let me get some sleep for tomorrow.

Vic

Poor baby

Ram

How are you?

Vic

I'm still packing, I know I know, but I'm almost done, swear! And then I'm gonna crash, I am not getting married with bags under my eyes and no hangover to show for it. Aw, that sucks though, are you gonna be lonely all by yourself?

Ram

Nono, I have my laptop, I'll get some work done.

Vic

Dork

Ram

I miss you

Vic

Always. It's just til tomorrow...

Ram

Can't wait.

BEAT

Victoria?

Vic

Hm?

Ram

Would you email me?

Vic

**What? Silly-
What's wrong with the phone?**

Ram

Nothing. I just ... miss that

Vic

**That's silly. I ah-
I don't know what you're talking about
Hold on, the phone is- just a sec-**

VIC COVERS THE MOUTHPIECE OF THE PHONE FOR SEVERAL BREATHS.
SHE DECIDES TO COME ALMOST CLEAN.

Hi honey?

Ram

Yes

Vic

Ok, that's better- I was getting this wacky buzzing noise- What were you saying?

Ram

I just said send me an email-

Vic

**Oh, honey, I just want to finish packing!
Anyway, I haven't used my email in months, I don't even know if I'd remember my
password-**

BEAT

Ram?

Ram

Yeah

Vic

**OK, that's it, last box. I'm really sleepy, ok honey?
I'll see you in the morning
Sweet dreams**

Ram

Yeah

**THEY HANG UP
VIC SITS WITH THE PHONE IN HER HAND, WIDE AWAKE, BREATHING.
MAGGIE APPEARS IN DOORWAY AND LOOKS AT FREE.**

Maggie

Good night

**MAGGIE EXITS
LIGHTS FADE
BLACKOUT**

Scene 3

LIGHTS UP ON MAGGIE AND FREE WAITING ON A BENCH. FREE IS ON HER BLACKBERRY, MAGGIE GLANCES OVER HER SHOULDER.
(WORDS ON SCREEN)

Maggie

Solitaire?

FREE NODS. MAGGIE POINTS AND SIGNS

..Red queen

FREE KEEPS PLAYING
RAM ENTERS IN A RUSH, COMPUTER BAG IN HAND

Maggie

Ram! Happy wedding day!

Ram/Maggie

Sorry I'm late!

Maggie

No, no, don't worry about it! Everyone's already inside, there's a coat check over there for your things, I'll go tell Vic you're here, she's almost ready-

MAGGIE EXITS

Ram

ok, thanks

Free

Hi

Ram

Hi

Free

Congratulations

Ram

Thanks

HE SITS NEXT TO HER ON THE BENCH, GLANCES AT THE BLACKBERRY.

Free

Just killing time. Sorry.

Ram

Oh no, go ahead, I don't mind

FREE RETURNS TO HER BLACKBERRY.
RAM TAKES OUT HIS LAPTOP, OPENS IT. HE TYPES, WORDS ON SCREEN.

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

You must have thought I was an idiot

THE MESSAGE POPS UP ON FREE'S BLACKBERRY. SHE FREEZES, LOOKS AROUND, CONSIDERS LEAVING, FINALLY LOOKS AT HIM, READS THE MESSAGE AGAIN, SHAKES HER HEAD, TYPES

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

vic loves you

BOTH ARE CAREFUL NOT TO LOOK DIRECTLY AT THE OTHER AGAIN AS THEY CONTINUE TYPING

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

You could have told me the truth at any time. You didn't.

BEAT

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

what will you do?

BEAT

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

Vic doesn't know about us. Don't tell her.

FREE LOOKS AT HIM NOW, SEARCHES HIS FACE, REALIZES HE MEANS IT.
RELIEVED, SHE TYPES.

TO: balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

ok

THEY BOTH SIT SILENTLY FOR A BEAT, THEN FREE TYPES

I was lonely

Ram

Yeah well-

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

I was lonely too. But I'm changing that.

SILENCE.

We were lovers

Do you realize that?

RAM SIGNS "YOU, ME, LOVERS"
RAM HEARS VOICES OFFSTAGE, GESTURES TO FREE. RAM PUTS AWAY HIS
LAPTOP, FREE CONCEALS HER BLACKBERRY, BUT THE WORDS 'WE WERE
LOVERS' LINGER ON THE SCREEN
MAGGIE ENTERS

Maggie

OK, are you ready? Da, da-da-daaa- ('HERE COMES THE BRIDE')

VIC ENTERS, WEARING AN INDIAN WEDDING SARI

Ram

Hey! Look at you!

Vic

Yeah, your mom made me like a hospital bed, I feel like I'm going to unravel any minute, there's this one measly little pin right here, and then a lot of tucking- I'm babbling.

It looks ok?

VIC SEARCHES RAM'S FACE

Free

You're beautiful

Maggie

You look like a queen

Vic

-Ram?

BEAT

Ram/Maggie

Don't worry. If anything starts slipping I'll hang on to you

Vic

My hero!

You OK? You look a little...

Ram/Maggie

No! They had me drinking last night, I'm a bit dehydrated. Nothing marrying you won't fix.

(TO FREE) Free, since you're Victoria's only family here today, I just wanted to say- I'll take care of her. I'll make her happy.

Free/Maggie

thank you

Ram/Maggie

*I love that word you two use- lover, right? Great word.
(TO VIC) You are what you do*

Vic

Right

Ram/Maggie

*Right.
So, Victoria, let's do this.*

RAM TAKES VIC'S HAND. RAM, VIC, AND MAGGIE EXIT

FREE DELETES THE WORDS REMAINING ON BLACKBERRY/SCREEN.
BLACKOUT WITH FINAL LETTER.

Scene 4

LIGHTS UP ON MAGGIE AND FREE ALONE IN THEIR APARTMENT, POST-PARTY. MAGGIE SITS IN THE DARK.
FREE APPROACHES, TURNS ON A TABLE LAMP, ILLUMINATING THEIR HANDS AND FACES. MAGGIE HAS BEEN CRYING.
FREE FINDS THE YEATS BOOK, RETURNS AND SITS ACROSS FROM MAGGIE
(ASL ONLY, DIALOGUE ON SCREEN)

Maggie

Oh, don't bother, you won't like it. I was a kid, it's just a poem- I don't care about it-

MAGGIE REACHES FOR THE BOOK, FREE HANGS ON TO IT

Shit Free, what happened to us?

FREE KEEPS READING

OK.

Do you want me to translate?

Free

No.

SHE PUTS THE BOOK DOWN AND FACES MAGGIE

When you're old, and gray

Maggie

Stop... I'm sorry...

Free

Shut up. When you're old and gray, and falling asleep all the time, can't carry on a conversation, arthritis in your hands...

Maggie

*I'm sorry, you were right-
I don't know what happened-*

Free

Maybe you'll need a book to communicate with me, you'll open it and point at words, and I'll bring you what you need

Maggie

You're not old?

Free

I exercise more

Maggie

Ok

Free

And people will talk, and say look at those old witches, what do they do all day, they can't even have a conversation, poor things!

Maggie

Well they're stupid

Free

That's right. Because even though you have no period anymore, and you're old and wrinkly and almost dead, I just like having you next to me in bed. I can't sleep without you.

Maggie

Me too

Free

Me too

WHEN FREE JOINS THEIR HANDS, THE SIGNS FOR 'ME TOO' (SAME) BECOME THE WORD 'CONTINUE'

Free

Continue

LIGHTS FADE. END OF PLAY

