

Falling in Love with Martha

by

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**CHARACTERS**

MARY.....	MARTHA	40-50	Actress
TONY.....	GEORGE	40-50	Teacher
SUSAN.....	HONEY	30-40	University Lecturer
DAVID.....	NICK	30-40	TEACHER
KEN.....	DIRECTOR	45	
LINDA .....	ASST.DIR./STAGE	MANAGER	35

**THE PLACE : THE DRAMA CENTER, SINGAPORE**

**THE TIME : 1990**

ACT 1

SCENE 1 - Rehearsal

*As the audience filters into the auditorium the set for Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf? is mostly finished. There's a bar SL and bookshelves and desk/chair SR. There is no sofa, set pieces etc. There is a door upstage centre which is double hinged so it can open either way and a staircase upstage SL. Loud hammering/sawing can be heard going on which ceases five minutes before curtain. Lights change as if they are being tested. Voices arguing in an unintelligible language emanate from the lighting box.*

*House Lights Down. Stage Lights up.*

**DIRECTOR**

*(from a seat in the audience)*

Okay. Let's go. What are we waiting for?

*The door upstage center rattles as if someone is trying to open it. The pushing and pulling becomes more and more desperate.*

What the hell's the matter?

**MARTHA**

*(backstage)*

The door's stuck. I can't open it.

**DIRECTOR**

Linda, where's the carpenter?

*Enter LINDA from SL with headphones and script.*

**LINDA**

He had to leave.

**DIRECTOR**

Damn. Martha, George just get on the set and stand in front of the door and...

**GEORGE**

*(He opens the door in the opposite direction)*

It opens the wrong way.

*(Enter George and Martha)*

**DIRECTOR**

We'll get it fixed. Come on guys...I know it's our first time in theatre but we've only got until 10:30 and it's 9:00 already. Let's take it from the top again. You're entering in the dark. It's 2:00 in the morning. You're drunk. The play's got to start off with a bang.

*(Actors and LINDA go off-stage.)*

Let's go. Lights off. Wait for them to come in.

*There's a crash. Martha laughs halfheartedly.*

**MARTHA**

I can't find the damn switch.

**GEORGE**

There isn't one. Go on. Jesus...

**MARTHA**

What?

**GEORGE**

Jesus...it's your first line.

**MARTHA**

Oh yea...sorry...Jesus

*She laughs badly. The lights come up.*

**GEORGE**

Shhhhhhhh

**MARTHA**

H.Christ

**GEORGE**

For God's sake Martha it's 2 o'clock in the ...

**MARTHA**

Oh George.

**GEORGE**

Well, I'm sorry but...

**MARTHA**

What a cluck! What a cluck you are.

**GEORGE**

It's late you know? Late.

**MARTHA**

What a dump! Hey, what's that from? What a dump?

**DIRECTOR**

*(interrupting)*

No. No, no, no, no.

**MARTHA**

What?

**DIRECTOR**

You're supposed to be Bette Davis. Say it like she does in the film.

**MARTHA**

I am.

**DIRECTOR**

No you're not. You sound like a kindergarten teacher. And remember, you've been to a party, you're drunk. Act drunk will you?

**GEORGE**

Keith, I'm confused. What does cluck means as a noun? Is she suggesting I'm going to lay an egg?

**DIRECTOR**

It's a drug thing. Someone who can't score.

**GEORGE**

I've never heard of that.

**MARTHA**

I thought it just meant an idiot which sounds more like something she would say.

So how drunk do you want me?

**DIRECTOR**

Falling down drunk but...not so drunk that you're unintelligible.

**MARTHA**

I have a bad ankle.

**DIRECTOR**

I don't want you to actually fall down. Just take centre stage and look uncertain on your feet and then deliver the line. Command the audience. It was fine when you did it earlier.

**GEORGE**

*(To Martha)*

I've never heard of cluck referring to drugs.

**MARTHA**

Whatever. It's American, live with it.

**GEORGE**

How do you do more drunkenness?

**MARTHA**

Depends. If you are an American drunk you fall over, slur your speech and get aggressive. I know, I'm married to one. If you're British you just salute and sing God save the Queen. Right?

**GEORGE**

Very funny.

**DIRECTOR**

O.K. Let's go from the top again. We won't bother with the lighting cue. And George, can we have exhaustion as well as drunkenness?

*(George and Martha repeat the scene but totally over the top)*

**MARTHA**

*(Laughing hysterically)*

Jesus.

**GEORGE**

*(Adding his idea of drunkenness which is hiccups and a strange sort of groaning)*

Shhhhhhhhhhh

**MARTHA**

H.Christ

**GEORGE**

*(Slurring his speech)*

For God's shake Martha ish two o'clock in the morning.

**MARTHA**

Oh George!

*(quietly)*

Are you alright?

**GEORGE**

*(quietly)*

I'm acting more drunk.

Well, I'm shoirry but...

**MARTHA**

What a cluck. What a ...

*(She staggers, trips and falls)*

Fuck

**GEORGE**

What? Are you all right?

**MARTHA**

My ankle gave way.

**DIRECTOR**

That was way over the top George. Drunk people don't think they are drunk. If you're going to act drunk, think of yourself as being sober.

**MARTHA**

I'm going to have to get this checked tomorrow.

*(Enter Linda)*

**LINDA**

Ken...at this rate we're not going to make it to the end of Act 1 - again. David and I have to get back for the kids. Could we cut to Nick and Honey's entrance?

**DIRECTOR**

That's a good idea. We'll do that next...

*(His phone rings. He answers it)*

No. I'm gonna be late. I'm sorry. I had to entertain a big client coming in from Japan so I slept over at the Club. What do you mean? What sort of father? Of course I love him. You have no right to say that. What sort of mother are you? Get a life will you? No! I'll talk to you later.

All right everyone, sorry, take five and then we will take it from Nick and Honey's entrance. Nick? Honey?

*(Off stage)*



**HONEY**

Okay.

**NICK**

We're ready Ken.

*(Ken exits to make a private call.)*

**GEORGE**

What's the matter with him? He's testy.

**MARTHA**

Mmmmmmm...Personal problems.

**GEORGE**

What kind of problems?

**MARTHA**

Marital.

**GEORGE**

They have children don't they?

**MARTHA**

Just one. A four year old.

**GEORGE**

You worked with him before, didn't you?

**MARTHA**

Yea, we were in a play, a melodrama. We...

*(Re-enter Ken.)*

**DIRECTOR**

*(We hear the end of a conversation.)*

...of course I love you. Okay. Bye. Nick, keep in mind that Martha's the president's daughter and this invitation could be important to your career. You've been socializing at the party and you're drunk.

**NICK**

*(Off stage)*

Got it.

**DIRECTOR**

And this goes for everyone. I want you to stay in character. Linda, I am going to have to leave in a minute. Something's come up. Family...you know. I'm sorry.

**LINDA**

Oh. All right but I may have to finish a bit earlier myself because of the baby sitter.

**DIRECTOR**

That's fine. Just do your best. Let's go from the door chiming. Your line Martha. Party! Party! Could I hear the door chime please?

*Door chime*

Good. Something works! That's Martha's cue.

**MARTHA**

*(limping)*

I'm centre stage. George you're down left.

**DIRECTOR**

Right. Door chime.

*Door chime*

**MARTHA**

Party! Party!

**GEORGE**

I'm really looking forward to this Martha.

**MARTHA**

Go answer the door.

**GEORGE**

*Not moving*

You answer it.

**MARTHA**

Get to the door. I'll fix you...you

**GEORGE**

*Fake spits*

....to you.

*Door chime again*

**MARTHA**

*Shouting to the door*

C'MON IN.....

*(to George)*

I said get over there

**GEORGE**

All right love...whatever love wants. Isn't it nice the way some people have manners though, even in this day and age. Isn't it nice, that some people won't just come breaking into other people's houses even if they do hear some sub-human monster yowling at 'em from inside...

**MARTHA**

SCREW YOU...!

*Door is flung open the wrong way and Nick and Honey are framed in the entrance*

**GEORGE**

Ahhhhhhhhhh!

**MARTHA**

Hi! Hi, there...c'mon in!

**HONEY & NICK**

*(Ad lib)*

*Hello, here we are... Hi ... (etc...)*

**DIRECTOR**

*(interrupting)*

No, no, no, no... George you missed out the whole section about the bit. Linda check that.

**GEORGE**

I didn't. My cue is "get over there".

**MARTHA**

I gave you the cue.

**LINDA**

The cues are the same. Your line's the same the first time it's "Just don't start on the bit, that's all.

**MARTHA**

I've got the line about the kid.

**GEORGE**

Sorry yes. The cue's the same. Ken, I'm sorry I probably should have asked this before but what is the "bit"?

**DIRECTOR**

The bit about the kid. The bit of their lives where they discuss this fictitious kid. They have no children.

**GEORGE**

Okay. I thought it could have been a tool bit or something...an American thing. It sounded odd.

*Director's phone rings. He glances at the number.*

**DIRECTOR**

I'm going to have to go. I'm sorry.

*(to everyone)*

This was just the first run through in theatre and there's a lot of work to be done. We've got two weeks to opening and we'll be rehearsing every night this week. You have the schedule. Let's not waste the rest of the time tonight. Linda will you take over. Thank you everyone, it's going to be a great show. Are you all right Mary?

**MARY**

I'm okay. I think it is just sprained.

**DIRECTOR**

Good. Be sure you get it looked at. See you guys.

*Exit*

*Pause*

**HONEY**

*(outburst)*

You know, I never say much but I have a life too outside this play. I've been standing around for almost two hours. I have a husband I haven't seen these last two months except for a lump on the other side of the bed. My work is under review at the university and my contract renewal is coming up at the end of the month. Every time I come to rehearsal there are problems and everyone else's lives and time seem to be far more important than mine. You are all lovely people and I like you but I'm so stressed out..

*She is close to tears. There's a silence.*

**NICK**

Honey...I understand. I think you should go home. Don't you think so Linda?

**HONEY**

My name is Susan.

**NICK**

Sorry. Susan.

**LINDA**

Honey I think you should go home.

**HONEY**

Thank you. I'm sorry. I don't know why I'm so upset.

**LINDA**

See you tomorrow. You are probably just tired. Don't worry about it.

**HONEY**

I don't know. I just don't know.....

*Exit crying.*

**LINDA**

I think we're all tired. Are there any scenes without Honey you would like to do? Oh, and before I forget, I got a call from The Straits Times today. They're sending a reporter tomorrow.

**GEORGE**

But we haven't even...

**LINDA**

They just want to do a preview and take photographs...probably do an interview with Ken.

**NICK**

Well I'd like to rehearse the scene on the couch Martha, our scene...

**LINDA**

But we haven't got a couch yet. It's coming tomorrow.

**NICK**

We could improvise. There's a bench down in the lobby...

**LINDA**

David, we haven't time. The baby-sitter warned me she would not stay past 10:30. I swore we would be back by then. It's already ten past ten.

**MARTHA**

Linda why don't you two go? We'll clear up here, ready for tomorrow.

**NICK**

We've never rehearsed that scene as it's scripted.

**LINDA**

David!

**NICK**

All right...whatever you want. I'll be in the car. Good night everyone. See you tomorrow. We never semm.....

*Exit*

**LINDA**

I'm sorry...

**MARTHA**

No... don't worry about it... Linda, you look worn out.

**LINDA**

I am. Between the kids and both of us working and the play... and the way David... and honestly... I have no idea where I am going to get snapdragons in Singapore or how the hell we're going to smash a bottle on stage... I'm just...

**GEORGE**

Linda just leave everything as it is. We'll tidy up. It will sort itself out. I will look for some fake snapdragons to throw at Nick. There's a little fake flower shop round the corner from my house. We have another two weeks.

**LINDA**

Thank you both. I'll see you tomorrow...don't forget the reporter will be here at 7:30. David, hold on will you?

*Exit.*

**MARTHA**

Jesus...

**GEORGE**

..... Shhhhhhhhhh

**MARTHA**

H. Christ. What a mess.

**GEORGE**

Can't back out now.

**MARTHA**

Everyone's stressed out.

*She sits on the only chair. He goes behind the bar.*

**GEORGE**

Show must go on. There's hardly room to swing a cat behind here. I don't know how I'm going to break that bottle.

**MARTHA**

It doesn't help that David goes on and on about the scene on the couch. We rehearsed it four times last week. I thought it was fine.

**GEORGE**

Mmmmmm...He has a bit of a reputation.

**MARTHA**

For what?

**GEORGE**

Well...to put it crudely "if it moves, mount it".

**MARTHA**

What does that mean?



**GEORGE**

He likes women and assumes they are all attracted to him. I actually found him once in the bathroom with...

**MARTHA**

His hands are all over me.

**GEORGE**

I think Linda just ignores it. We're going to need a lot of empty bottles.

**MARTHA**

Better get going. John's home tomorrow.

**GEORGE**

Your husband?

**MARTHA**

Yea, he's been in Thailand for the last month. God knows what he's been up to there.

**GEORGE**

You know men, alpha male stuff...  
silverback...Thailand...buchakong...

**MARTHA**

I haven't a clue what you're talking about. You Brits...honestly...it's like listening to a foreign language.

**GEORGE**

Two great nations separated by a common language.

**MARTHA**

*She laughs*

One of your Brit expressions?

**GEORGE**

Churchill actually. Do you need a lift? I think they're about to shut down the theatre.

**MARTHA**

No, I've got my car. You've got kids haven't you?

**GEORGE**

Yes... son and daughter, both at boarding school back in England. Costs a fortune but the Singapore government kindly pays for most of it. You have any children?

**MARTHA**

I have a son who lives in the US with his father, my previous husband.

**GEORGE**

Oh. Right.

Let's go. We'll clear up tomorrow. At least they got the set built... sort of. No sofa and no stage props and... we'll..need booze. A lot of it. Did they get the painting? I couldn't find anything suitable.

**GEORGE**

Ah yes, I think so. Ken said he had one. ... the pictorial representation of Martha's mind. A bit like the vase in In Camera.

**MARTHA**

What?

**GEORGE**

The picture it's like the vase in Satre's play... In Camera. They're all in hell and there's this weird vase...

**MARTHA**

*She corrects his pronunciation*

Vase.

**GEORGE**

Oh, sure.

*(he sings)*

You say potato and I say I potato

**MARTHA**

Please. Give me a break.

**GEORGE**

Sorreee

**MARTHA**

*Goes to the bar*

You know if Linda put a brick in the waste basket,  
you could smash the bottle in it.

**GEORGE**

Maybe. Not much room there. Sounds a bit dangerous  
but it might work. Good thinking.

*He practices*

I'll bring a brick tomorrow unless being in  
possession of a brick has been banned by the  
Singapore government. In which case, I will get  
fined. Singapore's a fine place.

**MARTHA**

I still don't like those stairs.

*She tries them out*

**GEORGE**

Narrow.

**MARTHA**

I don't want a broken ankle.

**GEORGE**

At least there's a rail.

**MARTHA**

Who's doing costumes?

**GEORGE**

Ken hasn't mentioned it. I think we just do our own.

**MARTHA**

I've got just the right dress for her to change into. Low cut, black, sequinned and tight.

**GEORGE**

Not a lot of choice for me. Virtually, the clothes I wear for school.

**MARTHA**

I've never understood why you teachers dress so badly.

**GEORGE**

Excuse me.

*(cont'd)*

**MARTHA**

*She practises walking down the steps*

It's no wonder nobody takes teachers seriously and pays them so little when they dress like paupers.

**GEORGE**

Thank you... I can brush up quite nicely when the occasion arises. And I'm actually well paid. On my scale of values.

**MARTHA**

Sorry. I didn't mean to be rude. We're all getting cranky.

**GEORGE**

Apology accepted.

*Lights go off leaving them in the dark.*

**MARTHA**

Shit. I left my bag in the dressing room downstairs. Would you hold my hand George? Tony. I'm terrified of falling. Thanks. I do hope we can pull this play off. It's a monster.

**GEORGE**

God knows. Here. Take my arm.

*He starts singing with a cod American accent.*

There's no business like show business.

**MARTHA**

If I fall I'm blaming you.

**GEORGE**

-like no business I know

Everything about it is appealing, Everything that traffic will allow

**MARTHA & GEORGE**

*Martha joins in.*

Nowhere could you get that happy feeling when you are stealing that extra bow.

*She giggles and he laughs.*

*Exeunt Singing.*

SCENE 2 -THREE DAYS LATER

*A sofa has been added to the set along with a painting of "Martha's Mind". Glasses are on the bar as well as wine bottles. The door has been fixed. There's more furniture. Lights go up revealing George pacing up and down repeating his lines.*

**GEORGE**

The following summer on a country road, with his learner's permit in his pocket and his father on the front seat to his right he...

*He falters*

He... What in hell did he do? I can't remember...

*He checks his book*

Yes. HE SWERVED... he SWERVED...

*He beats his head*

What's so difficult about that? Imagine it... see the picture... he swerved his car to avoid a porcupine... porcupine... see it... big one... urggggg crossing the road... and swerved into a large tree. Think swerve, porcupine, tree... Bang. Dead bit. I think there's something wrong with my memory.

*Enter Honey*

**HONEY**

Oh. Sorry. I didn't realize...

**GEORGE**

It's okay, I was here early to rehearse my lines...came straight from work... some of them just don't stick.

**HONEY**

At least you have some. I spend most of my time waiting to say mine.

**GEORGE**

You can have some of mine if you'd like. I have far too many.

**HONEY**

No thanks. What the hell's that?

*(She points to the picture)*

It's obscene.

**GEORGE**

I don't know. I quite like it myself. I think it's Ken's.

**HONEY**

It looks as if someone just spilled paint on it.

**GEORGE**

It's modern art. Abstract expressionism.

**HONEY**

It doesn't do anything for me. Is Ken here?

**GEORGE**

I don't think so.

**HONEY**

I decided I really don't care for this play. I liked it when I first read it. But everyone is so bitchy to each other. I thought of asking Ken if he could find a replacement for me. Do you think he'd mind?

**GEORGE**

I think he would go over the edge. Dress rehearsal is a week next Friday.

**HONEY**

My part's so small. Anyone could do it.

**GEORGE**

Not really. AND you're extremely good and wonderful to play against. You always make me want to laugh. You're one of the best drunks I have ever seen.

**HONEY**

Thank you but that's odd because I don't drink. I never have.

**GEORGE**

Well, you must have watched a lot of drunks.

**HONEY**

True. Both parents were alcoholics.

**GEORGE**

You see. There's always a reason for everything.

**HONEY**

What?

**GEORGE**

If your parents hadn't been alcoholics you wouldn't have known how to act drunk so well.

**HONEY**

I suppose so. Strange way to look at it.

**GEORGE**

And you're line perfect.

**HONEY**

I have a photographic memory.

**GEORGE**

Wow...You're kidding. I always wondered what that would be like. How does it work?

**HONEY**

Well, I just highlight my lines and then I stare at the page, read it and then I'm able to retain the lines visually. It's like having the script page by page in my head so I just need to turn the pages.

**GEORGE**

Wow... I want your brain.



**HONEY**

I still have to rehearse it mimetically.,  
repetition... You know. Would it be letting the side  
down if I dropped out... now?

**GEORGE**

Yes. I don't think we could go ahead.

**HONEY**

All right. I'll stay. What scenes are we doing  
tonight?

**GEORGE**

Ken wasn't happy with the scene after the gun.

**HONEY**

Gun?

**GEORGE**

The toy gun with the flag.

**HONEY**

That's so stupid.

**GEORGE**

I thought it was funny. Starting page 32 he said.

**HONEY**

How on earth are they going to make that? It's got to  
actually look like a real gun and it fires a flag.

**GEORGE**

I think he's having it made by one of his workmen in  
the oil yard.

**HONEY**

Did you know Albee named George and Martha after  
George Washington and his wife?

**GEORGE**

God no. Did he really?

**HONEY**

Nick's supposed to be Nikita Khrushchev.

**GEORGE**

Bloody Hell. I never knew that.

**HONEY**

I don't understand. Why would Martha Washington want to have sex with Nikita Khrushchev?

**GEORGE**

I'll have to think about that one. Deep symbolism I expect. Like the red eyes and Daddy mouse.

*Enter LINDA*

**LINDA**

Okay. I've got the booze. It was expensive. Twice the price of back home.

**GEORGE**

Can't have the locals getting drunk. Leave that to the ex-pats and charge them twice as much.

**LINDA**

We'll have to make up some tea to look like the brandy and bourbon. I'll have to pour the contents down the sink.

**GEORGE**

*(shocked)*

You can't do that! What a waste. I brought a couple of empty bottles which aren't as good but we can pour the real stuff in them. Oh, and the brick is in the basket to break the bottle. Mary's idea.

**LINDA**

Great. Thank you. We need to get lots of empty bottles from the club. The barman promised to collect them for us. Where's Ken?

*Enter Nick*

**NICK**

Okay. Let's get this show on the road. Wow. Look at that.

*(he indicates the painting)*

That's terrific.

**HONEY**

You must be kidding.

**NICK**

No there's such depth of feeling. Look at those colors.

**HONEY**

A child could have done that.

**NICK**

Visceral. Look at those curves.

**HONEY**

I am clearly on the wrong planet. I don't see how that has anything to do with the play.

**LINDA**

David, don't forget to pick up the empty bottles at the Clubhouse tomorrow. Where's Mary? Not like her to be late.

**GEORGE**

Not like Ken to be late.

**LINDA**

We'll just use water for the time being. Ken wanted us to go from "You're right at the meat of things baby." Page 32. He said you were too slow... that it dragged. Oh... here's Mary, thank God.

**MARTHA**

Sorry. Problems.

**HONEY**

What now?

**MARTHA**

Ken won't be coming.

**HONEY**

Why?

**MARTHA**

I don't know, something's... he said we should carry on without him.

**GEORGE**

What?

**NICK**

We can manage without him. Can't we? He always has a problem.

**GEORGE**

What's wrong with him? Did he get run over by a porcupine?

**MARTHA**

Not funny. Domestic difficulties.

**GEORGE**

Oh come on.

**MARTHA**

I'll tell you later.

**LINDA**

Places everyone. Martha you're standing next to the sofa, George behind the sofa upstage. Honey on the sofa. Don't forget your brandy glass.

**HONEY**

*She giggles and pretends to be drunk and fondles her glass*

I love my brandy glass.

**LINDA**

Enter Nick. Look around. Martha...

**MARTHA**

You're right at the meat of things baby.

**NICK**

*Taking a drink from the side table*

Oh?

**HONEY**

*(With a giggle)*

They thought you were in the Math department.

**NICK**

Well, maybe I ought to be.

**MARTHA**

You stay right where you are... you stay right at the... meat of things.

**LINDA**

*(interrupts)*

Martha, that has got to sound sexier. Meat of things... you know.

**GEORGE**

You're obsessed with that phrase, Martha. It's ugly.

**MARTHA**

*Ignoring George... to Nick*

You stay right there.

*(Laughs)*

Hell, you can take over the History Department just as easy from there as anywhere else.

God knows, somebody's going to take over the History Department, and it ain't going to be Georgie-boy, there... that's for sure. Are ya swampy...are ya, Huh?

**LINDA**

*(interrupting)*

In his face. Keep going.

**GEORGE**

In my mind Martha you are buried in cement, right up to your neck.

*(Martha giggles)*

No... right up to your nose... that's much quieter.

**MARTHA**

Georgie boy here, says you are terrifying. Why are you terrifying?

**NICK**

*(With a small smile)*

I didn't know I was.

**HONEY**

*(A little thickly)*

It's because of your chromosomes, dear.

**LINDA**

*(interrupting)*

Honey, you're supposed to say that "thickly".

**HONEY**

I don't know what that means.

**LINDA**

It's as if you know what's going on.

**HONEY**

Oh.

**NICK**

Oh, the chromosome business.

*There's a disturbance at the entrance to the theatre. Ken enters.*

**DIRECTOR**

Shhhh... the play is in progress... sorry ...sorry... sorry... Shhhhhh. The play's in progress...

*(He is drunk and during the following dialogue makes his way somehow towards the front of the auditorium.)*

Excuse me... excuse me... excuse me...

*(He clambers about the auditorium distracting both the audience and the actors.)*

**MARTHA**

*(to Nick)*

What's all this about chromosomes?

**NICK**

Well chromosomes are...

**MARTHA**

I know what chromosomes are, sweetie, I love 'em...

**NICK**

Oh well then...

**DIRECTOR**

*(To an audience member)*

Are you enjoying the play? I'm the director. How do you do? I have a problem with my wife. Oh, and I'm late for rehearsal. That's a no no. Never be late for rehearsal.

**GEORGE**

Martha eats them for breakfast... she sprinkles them on her cereal.

**DIRECTOR**

Ha! Ha! Ha! Funny line. Chromosones. Everyone's got 'em. She sprinkles them on her cereal.

**GEORGE**

*(To Martha now)*

It's very simple, Martha, this young man is working on a system whereby chromosomes can be altered.. The genetic make-up of a sperm cell will be changed... re-ordered...to order actually... for hair and eye color, stature, potency... propensity for certain diseases will be gone, longevity assured. We will have a race of men... Test tube bred. Incubator born... superb and sublime..

**MARTHA**

*(Impressed)*

Hunh!

**HONEY**

How exciting!

**DIRECTOR**

Yes! It's exciting. Changing the future.

**GEORGE**

But. Everyone will tend to be rather the same. Alike. Everyone will tend to look like this young man here.

**MARTHA**

That's not a bad idea.

**DIRECTOR**

*He claps*

Yes... that is it...yes! Beautiful... guys



**MARTHA**

Ken!

**DIRECTOR**

Don't interrupt. Keep going. If you forget a line... don't worry just keep going. The audience will never notice.

**MARTHA**

Ken.

**DIRECTOR**

Keep going. I like it.

**NICK**

*(Impatient)*

All right, now....

*(The cast is unsettled by these interruptions)*

**GEORGE**

But of course there will be a dark side to it, too. A certain amount of regulation will be necessary. A certain number of sperm tubes will have to be cut.

**DIRECTOR**

Yes. CUT!

*(to himself)*

God! I wish mine had been.

**MARTHA**

*(Not sure which way to look)*

Huh?

**GEORGE**

Millions on millions of them. Millions of tiny slicing operations that will leave just the smallest scar, on the underside of the scrotum.

*(Martha laughs)*

But which will assure the sterility of the imperfect, the ugly, the stupid, the...unfit.

**NICK**

*(Grimly)*

Now look...

**GEORGE**

...with this we will have, in time, a race of glorious men.

**DIRECTOR**

Yes. Look at him. The future.

**GEORGE**

Nick?

**DIRECTOR**

Right... look at him.

**MARTHA**

Umm...

**DIRECTOR**

Why are you saying that?

**MARTHA**

I'm agreeing with him.

**DIRECTOR**

Right.

**GEORGE**

I suspect we will not have much music, much painting but we will have a civilization of biologists.

**MARTHA**

Goody!

**NICK**

Are you finished?

**GEORGE**

*(Ignoring him)*

And I naturally am rather opposed to all this. History which is my field... History, of which I am one of the most famous bogs...

**MARTHA**

Ha, ha, Ha!

**DIRECTOR**

Come on Martha, laugh. Let me hear you laugh... like a hyena!

**MARTHA**

Ha, ha Ha!

**GEORGE**

Will lose its glorious variety and unpredictably. There will be order and constancy... and I am unalterably opposed to it. I will not give up Berlin.

*He breaks character*

Ken this is very difficult.

**MARTHA**

Ken enough!

**DIRECTOR**

Just keep going. Keep going.

**MARTHA**

You'll give up Berlin, sweetheart. You going to defend it with your paunch?

**GEORGE**

No... I won't. I will fight you young man... one hand on my scrotum, to be sure... but with my free hand I will battle you to the death.

**MARTHA**

Bravo!

**DIRECTOR**

Hold your scrotum.

**GEORGE**

What?

**DIRECTOR**

Hold your scrotum and pretend to attack him with a sword.

**GEORGE**

Jesus!

**HONEY**

*(Quite drunk to Nick)*

I don't see why you want to do all those things, dear, you never told me.

*(Actors look at each other)*

Whoops, I think I came in too early.

**NICK**

*(angry)*

Oh, for God's sake...

**HONEY**

*(shocked)*

OH! Sorry.

**DIRECTOR**

Keep going, keep going!

**GEORGE**

The most profound indication of a social malignancy. No sense of humor.

**DIRECTOR**

*(clapping)*

No sense of humor. No sense of humor. Yes. Yes!

**MARTHA**

Ken, I really think...

**DIRECTOR**

I know... I was late for rehearsal...I'm sorry. I am never late for rehearsal. I owe you all an apology. I would expect you to apologize.

**MARTHA**

It's all right Ken. I explained.

**DIRECTOR**

Explained?

**MARTHA**

Sort of.

**DIRECTOR**

Good. I'm sorry. My wife is expecting.

*(Silence... pause)*

**NICK**

Wow... Congratulations. You've been celebrating... obviously.

**DIRECTOR**

No. Not celebrating. Commiserating. It was a mistake.

**LINDA**

I'm sure it will be fine.

**DIRECTOR**

I have to tell her, my wife. I told you Mary. You are my friend.

**MARTHA**

Later, when you're sober.

**DIRECTOR**

No. You see, I don't love my wife any more. It's been over for a long time.

**NICK**

But... she's...

**DIRECTOR**

Pregnant. A mistake. Stupid, stupid mistake ...not thinking... and do you know what's worse? You can put up with not loving your wife, at least for a while, but I am in love.... with someone else. I love someone else. And I don't know what to do.

**MARTHA**

You need to go back to The American Club and get some rest.

**DIRECTOR**

Can't sleep. I told you all didn't I? This play will change you, change your lives. I told you when I cast you. It will change you... but I didn't think... it's... you see... it's about being honest. I know they play games but the play is about honesty. You can't live in a fantasy. Well... I have to tell her the truth. I have to to tell her the truth right now.

*(he makes his way out of the theatre)*

**MARTHA**

Ken... don't do anything stupid.

**DIRECTOR**

I have to tell her the truth. Keep rehearsing.

*Exit*

**LINDA**

Should someone go with him? He can't drive like that.

**MARTHA**

We had lunch at The American club... he was already drunk. He said he was going to go home by taxi.

**GEORGE**

Bloody hell.

**MARTHA**

I'll go and make sure he's Okay.

*Exits after Ken*

**GEORGE**

So who the hell is he in love with?

**NICK**

Should we do this last bit again? Right at the meat of things?

**LINDA**

David, shut up. Folks, I think we'll call it a day. There's no point...

**GEORGE**

Oh well. Fun and Games. Truth or Illusion. It's getting bloody confusing. I'm beginning to not be able to distinguish between the play and real life.

**LINDA**

We're starting at 6:30 Tomorrow. Please be here on time. We are way behind schedule.

*(Lights out)*

Damn why do they do that?

**GEORGE**

They want us out.

SCENE 3 TWO DAYS LATER

*The shelves are full. The bar has liquor bottles and glasses and set decor is about complete. Act 1 rehearsal has just finished.*

**DIRECTOR**

George, Martha can we do that bit after the gun where she tries to kiss you. It seemed so stagey and awkward bending over the sofa like that. Martha you're sitting. Nick and Honey...just take a break.

**MARTHA**

From the, "C'mon... give me a kiss"?

**DIRECTOR**

Yes.

**MARTHA**

Okay.

**GEORGE**

I'm behind her...I kiss her and then she's got to take my hand.

**MARTHA**

I don't see how I can. He has to bend over to kiss me THEN I take his hand and put it on my breast.

**DIRECTOR**

It doesn't work. It looked awkward and silly.

**GEORGE**

What if I was downstage, in front of the sofa? Would that work?

**DIRECTOR**

Let's try it. You've given the gun to Nick, come downstage on "You liked that did you?" Sit there.

**MARTHA**

Okay. C'mon give me a kiss.



**DIRECTOR**

Pull him down.

**GEORGE**

Later sweetie.

*They kiss but George's hand won't seem to go to her breast. It's awkward.*

**DIRECTOR**

Kiss... pull his left arm to your breast. Get his hand.

**GEORGE**

I'm left handed. It's awkward.

**MARTHA**

Just do it.

**GEORGE**

*(Deeply embarrassed)*

This doesn't work.

**DIRECTOR**

What's the matter, you never touched a woman's tit before?

**GEORGE**

Yes...I mean...it's just...awkward.

**DIRECTOR**

Okay, then look as if you're touching her breast. We have to move on. And please just do as I ask you. There's nothing personal. We're professionals.

**GEORGE**

Okay.

**MARTHA**

Please...don't worry. I'm fine whatever you do.

**DIRECTOR**

Cast? We have to do the bottle breaking scene again. The bottle didn't break. Linda, what went wrong?

**LINDA**

He has to hit it more forcefully. It's not going to break otherwise.

**GEORGE**

I hit it as hard as I could. If I hit it any harder, bits of glass are going to go out over the stage.

**DIRECTOR**

Let's do it again. Do we have spare bottles? It's got to look dangerous.

**LINDA**

I have a dozen.

**DIRECTOR**

Martha what's the intro. to that?

**MARTHA**

He says "Stop it Martha" and I say, "The hell I will."

**DIRECTOR**

Come in a bit earlier so he's got time to build. Let me see. Could we put the waste bin with the brick in it higher up, on a stool? He can't bend down and do it.

**LINDA**

I've got a stool. Here.

**DIRECTOR**

George, practice just the movement. Up so the audience can see the bottle then bring it down on the brick.

*George practices*

Martha, stand further away. Start off centre stage.

**MARTHA**

From "You getting angry baby?"

**DIRECTOR**

Yes. Ready George?

**GEORGE**

Yes.

**MARTHA**

You getting angry baby? Hunh? That's the way it was supposed to be. Very simple. And Daddy seemed to think it was a pretty good idea too. For a while. Until he watched for a couple of years. You getting angrier?.

**DIRECTOR**

Move a step closer. Keep your back to her George. Get into position.

**MARTHA**

Until he watched for a couple of years and started thinking maybe it wasn't such a good idea after all... that maybe Georgie boy didn't have the stuff... that he didn't have it in him and started thinking...

**GEORGE**

Stop it Martha.

**MARTHA**

*(Viciously triumphant)*

The hell I will. You see, George didn't have much push...he wasn't particularly aggressive. In fact he was sort of...

*(spits the word at George's back)*

...a FLOP! A great...big...Fat...FLOP!

*George grabs the bottle and brings down the bottle and it breaks perfectly.*

**GEORGE**

Jesus! I mean...I said stop it Martha.

*Everyone claps and cheers because it worked.*

**DIRECTOR**

*(to George)*

You're supposed to be crying George.

**MARTHA**

"I hope that was an empty bottle, George." I like that line.

**GEORGE**

I don't know how I'm going to do it every night. Look what I'm left with. That's dangerous.

**DIRECTOR**

I saw a Sam Shepard play once and in the first scene the actor dropped a glass and it broke in pieces and I spent the rest of the play terrified that someone on stage was going to cut their feet. It increased the dramatic tension but we don't want to go there.

**LINDA**

I don't think we want to go there. If we're careful it will be fine. All the bits went into the bin.

**DIRECTOR**

Okay. Let's move on. Act 2 went well except for the scene on the couch. What was the problem?

**NICK**

I don't think we've rehearsed it enough.

**DIRECTOR**

Martha have you got some different lipstick... non smudge or something. You looked grotesque by the time he'd finished with you.

**MARTHA**

I will get some. In the script it doesn't say he kisses me.

**DIRECTOR**

I'll check it. Honey, you may as well go. Tomorrow don't forget it's our first full run through. No calling for lines. No calling for lines. We open in a week.

**HONEY**

Ken, was I all right?

**DIRECTOR**

Great job. I believed you. You've got all those different stages of drunkenness down pat. Keep doing what you're doing. You're your own little play in your own right.

**HONEY**

Thank you. Thank you. Bye everyone.

**MARTHA**

As I said... in the script it doesn't say he kisses me.

**DIRECTOR**

See you tomorrow. Okay, George you're off stage. What?

**GEORGE**

I make my exit on the line "That's why you don't have any kids."

**DIRECTOR**

Right. Now you two are behind the sofa. That's how we blocked it. Martha you come downstage right. Nick? Your line.

**NICK**

Well, I don't know that that's... if that has to do with any...thing.

**DIRECTOR**

Martha you come to the end of the sofa.

**MARTHA**

Well, if it does, who cares? Hunh?

**DIRECTOR**

Why don't you put one knee on the sofa.

**NICK**

Pardon?

*(Martha blows him a kiss. Nick still concerned with George's remark)*

I...what?...I'm sorry.

**MARTHA**

I said...

*(Blows him another kiss)*

**DIRECTOR**

Come round to this side of the sofa.

**NICK**

*(Uncomfortable)*

Oh...Yes.

**MARTHA**

Hey...hand me a cigarette...lover.

*(Nick fishes in his pocket)*

That's a good boy.

*(He gives her one)*

**DIRECTOR**

Martha put one knee on the sofa... Tony balance yourself as you light it. Good. Now, Martha, slip your arm between his knee and his crotch.

*(She is finding this difficult)*

*(as an aside)*

It's written in the script.

**MARTHA**

*(She smiles, moves her hand a little)*

Now for being a good boy, you can give me a kiss. C'mon.

**NICK**

*(nervously)*

Look...I don't think we should.

**MARTHA**

C'mon baby... a friendly kiss.

**NICK**

*(Still uncertain)*

Well...

**MARTHA**

... you won't get hurt little boy.

**NICK**

Not so little...

*(Martha grimaces. It's taking every bit of control to act this out)*

**MARTHA**

I'll bet you're not. C'mon.

**DIRECTOR**

Now Nick. You put your right knee on the sofa... Martha you put the cigarette out. Put your arm around his neck. Move your hand up and down the outside of his leg.

**MARTHA**

*(between clenched teeth)*

Jesus.

**NICK**

But what if he should come back in and...or...

**MARTHA**

*(All the while her hand is  
moving up and down his leg)*

George? Don't worry about him.

**DIRECTOR**

Pull him back on top of you.

**MARTHA**

Besides who could object to a friendly little kiss?

**DIRECTOR**

You're right. You don't actually kiss. Stay in that position. Nick, don't kiss her.

**MARTHA**

Ken. I am not feeling well. Could we...I'm...

**DIRECTOR**

It's a slow intertwining.

**NICK**

That's what the problem is. We've never done this final part. I am supposed to put my hand on her breast and up her dress.

**MARTHA**

It doesn't say up her dress. It says inside her dress. Linda is that right?

**LINDA**

That's what it says in the script.



**NICK**

How am I supposed to get inside that dress?

**MARTHA**

Couldn't he just put his arm round me?

**DIRECTOR**

Yes... just have a go at her.

**MARTHA**

Ken I've had it. I'm exhausted. My ankle hurts.

**DIRECTOR**

OK! OK. I get it... everyone's tired. I think we're just flogging a dead horse.

**GEORGE**

When am I to make my entrance? At what stage of their intertwining do you want be to come in?

**MARTHA**

Tony...

*(desperately)*

As soon as I say TAKE IT EASY.

**GEORGE**

It's George actually.

**MARTHA**

I mean George. Can we do this tomorrow? We've got the beginning. Just let me think about this.

*(quietly through gritted teeth)*

If you don't come in on that line and interrupt him, I'll kill you.

**GEORGE**

Ice. Ice for the lamps of China.

**NICK**

What the hell does that mean?

**DIRECTOR**

I think we'll cut there. Home guys. Everyone needs rest. We're not doing any useful work.

**LINDA**

Are we finished?

**NICK**

Not really.

**GEORGE**

Sad. Sad. Sad.

**MARTHA**

I need the bandage this ankle.

*(He sings)*

Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf...

*(He shouts)*

It's all going to be too much for a Singapore audience in any case. Sex and violence. They're banned by the government?

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf... time to go home kiddies. Get some rest and get ready for the storm.

**DIRECTOR**

That painting looks great. The guys in the lighting booth... do you know them?

**GEORGE**

Just tell them what you want. They're in control.

**DIRECTOR**

Okay! You can turn out the lights. We're finished.

*(They go out abruptly)*

Whoops. I didn't mean immediately. Hey Everyone, just grab onto each other. Follow me.

*He leads them off.*

**GEORGE**

All together now. Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf. Sing it. Then we won't lose each other.

**ALL**

*Joining in one by one.*

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf....

**MARTHA**

*(In the dark)*

Why does he call the play that? Isn't it Who's Afraid the BIG BAD WOOLF?

**GEORGE**

Absolutely Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Woolf . Get it, Virginia Woolf

**MARTHA**

What's the connection?

**GEORGE**

Intense, intellectual introspection....stream of consciousness...

**MARTHA**

What the fuck does that mean?

**GEORGE**

It means we're all in danger of being overwhelmed by our psychology. I don't know. I'm just an English teacher.

*Exeunt*

(cont'd)

(cont'd)

ACT 2

SCENE 1 DRESS REHEARSAL

*Director comes up on stage with notebook and pen in hand. George and Martha are on the sofa.*

**DIRECTOR**

O.K.! Everyone back on stage. Honey, Nick! Back on stage. I've got notes and we need to rehearse the curtain call. Linda can you clear up the broken glass.

**LINDA**

God yes. Be careful. Watch your feet everyone.

*She sweeps the area. Nick and Honey come onto set.*

**GEORGE**

I'm sorry. I was being careful. Honestly. I must have hit the brick too hard.

**MARTHA**

It looked good. I'm staring at these shards of glass two inches from my nose.

**DIRECTOR**

Could we get someone from lighting?

**LINDA**

I don't think they speak English. They understand it but...

**DIRECTOR**

Maybe if you go and talk to them.

**LINDA**

Right. I'll use my six words of Mandarin.

**DIRECTOR**

I don't want them to shut us off again.

**LINDA**

They've got a copy of the play and they seem to be following it.

**DIRECTOR**

O.K. Cast. Well, you know the old superstition, Bad Dress, Good opening.

**GEORGE**

This play's not like the Scottish Play is it?

**MARTHA**

What?

**GEORGE**

Cursed....

**MARTHA**

No. Don't be ridiculous.

**GEORGE**

It's probably because of that painting.

**MARTHA**

Never understood it. Albee makes all the fuss about it in the first scene and then never mentions it again.

**GEORGE**

It's subversive.

**MARTHA**

Whatever THAT means.

**DIRECTOR**

Listen please. We got through it. That's about all. There wasn't any energy. It was flat and slow. You are not paying attention to each other.

You're not reacting to each other. There's no chemistry. You could drive a bus through your cues.

**NICK**

No audience.

**DIRECTOR**

Why? It shouldn't make any difference. Everyone needs to be faster on their cues.

**NICK**

*(more forcefully)*

We need an audience.

**DIRECTOR**

No. You need to focus on being Nick and pick up your cues. Do what I ask you.

**LINDA**

Ken, can I interrupt a minute? Guys! You're drinking from each others glasses. The audience may not notice but it's not healthy.

**DIRECTOR**

Is there a way to identify the glasses?

**GEORGE**

I am so sick of iced tea.

**LINDA**

There are eight glasses. I'll put a different type for each actor. Pick up your own glass. Please.

**DIRECTOR**

Linda's right. Be aware of where you put your glass. Even if it means changing your blocking. Stick with your own glass.

**DIRECTOR (cont'd)**

*He refers to his notes*

Can't read that...Wait a minute...G play more?

What does that mean?...Oh Yes George...In the opening scene with Honey and Martha you are off stage with Nick. Remember you're "getting" the guests and you're going to use this information to humiliate him. You can see through him and his ambitions. What's this next one...? Can't read it. Next... H great. Oh Yes... Susan... Wonderful... keep it at that pitch. When they lost their lines you got them back on script. Well done. Everyone. Go over your lines. Perhaps you can be a little more dramatic when George goes at you about the baby. You know. More hysterical, after all you had an hysterical pregnancy. Nick, this is difficult... I am not getting that sense that you're an intellectual whiz kid. You got your degree in Biology at 18 for God's sake. Think about where you're coming from. You're young, you're ambitious. Work on your back story. Why did you marry Honey? Did you feel obliged to marry her because she was pregnant? Why was her father's money important to you?

*(pauses and reads)*

The scene with Martha on the couch though...much better.

**NICK**

*(dismissively)*

Thanks Ken. I'll work on it.

**DIRECTOR**

By the way everyone. You should know that I received this in the post this morning. Linda, give me that manila envelope I gave you earlier. Did you look at it?

**LINDA**

*(angrily)*

Yes...

**DIRECTOR**

Do you think it's genuine?

**LINDA**

I don't know. I only see the scene from the wings. This was from out front. I couldn't see what went on between them.

**DIRECTOR**

I'm not sure but I think this is a joke or someone in Singapore doesn't like what we're doing or it's a prelude to blackmail... or the government is trying to shut down the play.

*(They congregate on the sofa.  
Martha pulls out a photograph)*

**GEORGE**

Good God... is that his prick.

**NICK**

What?

**MARTHA**

It's me and Nick on the sofa... his fly's open!

**NICK**

It can't be.

**GEORGE**

Don't you remember the photographer from The Straits Times? Last week.

**MARTHA**

Oh my God. If that gets published... they'll close us down.

**DIRECTOR**

I still think it's a joke.

**NICK**

That could be my shirt sticking through my...

**HONEY**

Your fly is definitely open.

**NICK**

They've doctored it. It's not difficult to do.



**GEORGE**

There was no note or anything? Just the photograph?

**DIRECTOR**

Yup.

**MARTHA**

Is this serious?

**LINDA**

David? Did you?

**NICK**

No.

**LINDA**

Couldn't you, just for once... behave as if you're married I'm ashamed of you.

**NICK**

I didn't do anything. I swear.

**LINDA**

My job's as important to me as yours is to you. If this photo goes public and it gets out that you were carrying on, on stage with your trousers undone, how's that going to look?

**NICK**

I honestly have no recollection. I'm sure...

**MARTHA**

I think it's fake. I think I would have remembered seeing his... you know ...

**DIRECTOR**

The only one who could have taken that is the photographer from the Straits Times. It's got to be a joke staged by one of the reporters. They've doctored the photograph.

**LINDA**

It could get us thrown out of the country.

**NICK**

If it's a joke, it's a damn sick one.

**GEORGE**

Oh I don't know... for The Straits Times it is quite enlightened. Imagine the headline. British Expat exposes his prick on stage. It could sell a lot of seats and newspapers.

*(Everyone except Nick starts laughing)*

**NICK**

I don't think it's funny.

*(He looks very closely at the photo)*

You can't actually see anything, can you?

**GEORGE**

Someone got a magnifying glass?

**NICK**

Funny.

**MARTHA**

I say we ignore it.

**ALL**

Agreed.

**GEORGE**

Horse hockey.

**MARTHA**

What?

**GEORGE**

It's nonsense.

**MARTHA**

Right.

**DIRECTOR**

I'll keep it under wraps, just in case. Nick, Honey Linda, go and get some rest. I need you firing on all cylinders tomorrow. George and Martha we need to look at a couple of rocky bits. Opening night tomorrow. We've got a full house. Wait a minute. Curtain call. Quickly. I have some changes. George, Martha I'm going to end the play with you on the stairs not on the couch. You've made up. You're about to go to bed. It's more appropriate. So, Honey, Nick, outside the door. Martha, George, up the stairs. Yes sit on the stairs there. Put your arm around her. Lights. Go up the stairs into the bedroom. Lights up... clapping... Honey, Nick come on in... bow. Clap clap... Martha, George.

*Martha starts down the stairs trips awkwardly, grabs the rail, falls and ends in heap at the bottom of the stairs.*

**MARTHA**

Damn... My ankle.

**DIRECTOR**

Are you all right?

**GEORGE**

Here let me help you. Hold onto my arm.

**MARTHA**

Thanks ..I twisted it - again. It's O.K. It's O.K.

*(to George )*

Help me up. It's O.K.

*Gingerly puts pressure on it.*

It's fine. I just pulled it a bit. The elastic bandage saved it. Stupid. Damn ankle. I'm fine.

**GEORGE**

*(holding her)*

Wow, that's a relief.

**MARTHA**

I'll just rest here for a minute.

**DIRECTOR**

Everyone. Listen up. About the curtain call. Come to the front. Bow. Acknowledge the lighting... Lighting?

*He addresses the box.*

Curtain call. Bowing. Count to ten. I Er San Se... Yes. You understand? Do they understand?

**LINDA**

Hope so. Otherwise. We're in the dark again.

**DIRECTOR**

So cast. Last bow, curtain. We'll just wing it. Honey, you told me you wanted to say something.

**HONEY**

Yes well... Um... I know this is not the right moment but I wanted you all to be the first to know. I just had it confirmed today. I'm expecting a baby.

*Pause.*

**DIRECTOR**

Well, that's antastic. Congratulations.

**HONEY**

And it's not an hysterical pregnancy!

*(squeals with laughter)*

**MARTHA**

*Getting up to hug her*

Susan, come here. I'm so happy for you. That is wonderful news.

**GEORGE**

Now you can be sick for real.

**HONEY**

Thank you. It's very exciting. We've been trying for a few years.

**DIRECTOR**

I told you all. This play will change your lives.

**LINDA**

*(hugging Honey)*

I'm delighted for you.

**NICK**

We have something to celebrate.

**DIRECTOR**

Well, let's celebrate when we get the play up and running. Now... I don't mean to hurry you on but I'm worried the lighting's going to shut down before I get a chance to run over these two bits with George and Martha.

**LINDA**

Cast call is at six tomorrow. David will you take the bag of broken glass? Honey, we'll walk you to your car. I'm so excited for you.

**HONEY**

Thank you. Thank you.

**LINDA**

Have you chosen a name.

**HONEY**

No yet... we're not sure...

*Exeunt LINDA, David and Susan.*

**DIRECTOR**

OK... page 72. You're being too nice to each other. Nick has just threatened you. You're laying into him Martha. You must have had arguments with your spouses...

**MARTHA**

Well... Mmmmm.

**DIRECTOR**

Let's hear that anger. Get the sarcasm. Martha your line. Very good George.

**MARTHA**

Very good George.

**GEORGE**

Thank you Martha

**DIRECTOR**

Sarcastically.

**GEORGE**

Thank you Martha

**MARTHA**

Really good.

**GEORGE**

I'm glad you liked it.

**DIRECTOR**

Keep it going.

**MARTHA**

I mean you did a good job... you really fixed it.

**DIRECTOR**

Better

**GEORGE**

Unh..hunh

**MARTHA**

It's the most... life you've shown in a long time.

**GEORGE**

You bring out the best in me baby.

**MARTHA**

You make me sick.

**DIRECTOR**

Excellent. Keep that level of antagonism.

*His phone rings.*

Excuse me. Yes. Sweetheart, I know. I think I'm being followed. I know it's stupid but she's desperate. She could have hired a detective. Look. I'll get over there as soon as I can. Yes, I'll be careful. This isn't Texas, there are no guns. The police are the only ones with guns and they don't shoot white people, they just cane them. Love you too.

Can you work out the finale? With you both on the stairs. It'll be very moving. Too much has been happening on that sofa. I have to go. Mary, I don't like to ask this but could I borrow your car? I'll talk to you about it later but I think I'm being followed... it just might help if...

**MARTHA**

Of course.

**DIRECTOR**

You could take mine.

**MARTHA**

Hey... I don't want to be followed. John leaves in the morning and he already thinks I'm carrying on with you so the last thing I need to do is go home in your car.

**GEORGE**

St. George to the rescue. I'll take you home. Just tell him your car broke down.

**DIRECTOR**

Brilliant.

**MARTHA**

Ken, the key's in the car. Hell this is Singapore. Nobody steals.

**DIRECTOR**

Thanks. Just practice that ending. I don't care what you do just end up on the stairs. You're good friends. I'm so proud of you both. You're going to be wonderful. Love you both.

*Exits*

**GEORGE**

Why do Americans always say they love everybody.

**MARTHA**

Because we're kind.

**GEORGE**

Tell the Vietnamese that.

**MARTHA**

If it wasn't for us, you'd be speaking German.

**GEORGE**

Yavohl mein liebbling.

**MARTHA**

Shut up.

**GEORGE**

You told me "shut up" in American was rude.

**MARTHA**

It is! Let's do the end of the play.



**GEORGE**

Okay! Have it your way. Just trying to be friendly.

**MARTHA**

We've seen Nick and Honey out the door. If I remember it says you go pick up the glasses and go to the bar. This ending is supposed to be very soft and very... slow.

**GEORGE**

*He says this very softly and very slowly*

Do you want anything Martha?

**MARTHA**

You are a very annoying person.

**GEORGE**

I'm taking you home. Be nice.

**MARTHA**

No... nothing.

**GEORGE**

All right.

*(Pause)*

Time for bed.

**MARTHA**

Excuse me?

**GEORGE**

Time for bed.

**MARTHA**

Oh, right. That's what you say... I thought...

**GEORGE**

*(with a gleam)*

It's the play, silly.

Are you tired?

**MARTHA**

I am fucking exhausted.

**GEORGE**

I am too. That's when you go to the stairs.

**MARTHA**

Can we call it a day?

**GEORGE**

More accurately you could call it an evening.

**MARTHA**

All right. I'll sit.

**GEORGE**

I'll come up behind you.

*(he sits next to her)*

Sunday tomorrow. All day.

**MARTHA**

Can we stop there. I've got it. Then you sit down.

**GEORGE**

Right. Then we do the little bit about destroying the kid. You say you're cold. I say it's late.

**MARTHA**

Yes. Long silence.

**GEORGE**

It will be better.

**MARTHA**

I don't know.

**GEORGE**

It will be... maybe.

**MARTHA**

I'm not sure.

**GEORGE**

No.

**MARTHA**

Just us?

**GEORGE**

Yes

**MARTHA**

I don't suppose maybe... we could...

**GEORGE**

No, Martha.

**MARTHA**

Yes. No.

**GEORGE**

Are you all right?

**MARTHA**

Yes. No.

**GEORGE**

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, Virginia Woolf,  
Virginia Woolf?

**MARTHA**

I am George.

**GEORGE**

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf

**MARTHA**

I ...am... George... I am.

*Long pause. Martha wipes away tears.*

**GEORGE**

That should work.

**MARTHA**

I just hope my ankle holds out. After all that fighting, it's such a beautiful ending. The audience is going to cry. They will know.

**GEORGE**

It's such a weird play, so many levels. How can two people fight like that and still love each other?

**MARTHA**

They probably fight because they care enough. It's a love story really.

**GEORGE**

You know, yhis sounds really weird but I am beginning to think I am George. I know exactly what he's going to say.

**MARTHA**

When I was arguing with John yesterday I knew I sounded just like Martha.

**GEORGE**

That'sdifficult.

**MARTHA**

John lost his job. He'd been drinking.

**GEORGE**

Sorry to hear that.

**MARTHA**

I don't want to move any more. We're always moving. I'm sick and tired of going from one place to the next. I like it here. I loved it in Australia. John's off to South Africa soon and then the U.K. He's got some job leads there. I don't know.

**GEORGE**

Not easy.

**MARTHA**

It's normal in business. He always finds a job. He's a wonderful communicator. I'd like to work but the government won't give me a work permit.

**GEORGE**

Isn't it odd, that painting. Every night it seems to be different. I'm beginning to be quite fond of it.

**MARTHA**

It doesn't mean anything to me. I am absolutely terrified. This play... is such a mountain to climb emotionally. God knows whether we'll get through it. If I can remember the lines.

**GEORGE**

We will. You'll be fine. You're are a fine actress. Hey, we're booked out. No choice. It was that picture of you and Nick on the sofa in the Straits Times... Without the additions. Got everyone excited.

**MARTHA**

God I hope so.

*Lights go out.*

**GEORGE**

Oh for God's sake. Time's up! Come on Martha. Time to leave.. Hold my hand,

*(he starts singing in the dark.)*

Hold my hand.

I'm a stranger in Paradise

**MARTHA**

*(she sings)*

All lost in a wonderland,  
A stranger in paradise.

**GEORGE**

If I stand starry-eyed

**MARTHA**

That's a danger in paradise,  
*The music fills the theatre*

**GEORGE & MARTHA**

For mortals who stand beside  
An angel like you.  
Till The moment I know  
There's a chance that you care

**GEORGE**

Who the hell is in that sound booth?

**MARTHA**

Who knows? This is Singapore. Someone's always  
watching you.

*Exeunt*

SCENE 5

*Darkened stage. Chinese Lion Dance drum playing. 20 seconds. One spot centre. It is ten years later. Nick walks into the spot and blinks. He is wearing a jacket and coat.*

**NICK**

*(he looks startled)*

Hi! Oh, yes. Yes it's been 10 years since we did Virginia Woolf. Linda and I are back in England now. What do I miss? Well I miss the food. Char Kwai Teow... and the Chili Crab. I don't miss the heat and sweating all the time. I have to admit Singapore was good to us. We saved money and with the contract bonus we bought Rose Cottage in the Cotswolds in the UK. It's what we'd always dreamed of. The play? Changed us? I don't think so. Ken was, I'm sorry, a lousy director. He had problems of his own and was never focused. Always had to be somewhere else. He had too many other things going on and there was no chemistry among the actors. In my productions I always work on the intimacy between the actors. They must get to know each other. It was so long ago so I don't remember all that much. I remember the critic gave me a very good review. Said that if the production had been on Broadway I would have won a Tony. Oh yes and one night Martha's tit came out of her dress. I remember that. The whole audience gasped. I kept staring at her and joggling my shoulder so she would nudge it back in. She didn't understand but she moved and it went back in any case. She didn't notice. The audience did and the word must have got around because the next day there was a line of young men at the box office wanting tickets.

Intimacy is so important in a production like that. I never felt intimate with Martha. George was O.K. But average. He did his job. I thought he was reasonable. I knew him from way back before Singapore. I applied for a job where he was Head of Department and he turned me down. I thought I was a very convincing Nick and really held the production together. I've got a good voice. I'm directing Chekhov at the Foxglove Theatre in February and now teach drama part-time. Linda and I play in different musical groups. I like being back in England. It feels safer. Thank you.

*Chinese drum played on the edges. It sounds angry.  
Nick is startled and leaves.*

**LINDA**

David? David... I need you to... Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Oh, a great play. A wonderful production and such lovely people. We were sold out. The reviewer in The Straits Times called it, "one of the finest productions that has appeared on the Singapore stage these many years past." Standing room only, literally. We let people stand in the side aisles. Probably broke the law. Me? Oh I am retiring in September. I love my teaching but I love performing as a musician more. I play the base sax quite well actually and I am learning the clarinet. We have this little band... I love it. I travel all over the place. I'm getting paid too would you believe it? The boys? Both at University now, one's doing music and the other sociology. I can't wait to see what they end up doing with their lives. Follow your passions I always told them. Follow your passions. They are my pride and joy.

David? He took a while to settle down. He was always *difficult*. He had ambitions. He's five years younger than I am. Younger men. You know. They can't... But it's O.K. The boys have made such a difference to our lives. And there's less temptation now... he's older... though don't tell him that. We're happy. I loved being part of that production. David!

*(Exits after Nick)*

**KEN**

*He strolls on.... pulls up a chair*

*There's a 15 second energetic blast of Chinese drum music.*

I love that Chinese drumming. When you come from Louisiana you love rhythm, any sort of rhythm, it's in your soul. It's where the blues came from. I'm in the oil industry like my dad. See this bent shoulder, that's from haulin' pipes as a teenager in the oil fields. Arthritis? Shit. Old bones before you're thirty. What? Who's Afraid? I ain't afraid of nothin... except women and what they can do to a man. The play?

*(the lights blink)*



Ten years ago if I'm correct, I told the actors "this play is gonna change your lives." And it did. That Edward Albee is as cunning as a fox. I never realized it would change mine so much. Love is a strange beast. We all want it. We all chase after it and when it arrives, fuck we don't know what the hell to do with it. I suppose that's why it's called love. No rhyme or reason. Just is. I thought I loved my wife. We had a kid. Me doing my job, her looking after the home, travelling to where the work was... havin' a good time making some money.. Then I met someone... and the alarm bells went off. I wasn't unhappy where I was but I wanted to be with this person. Can you understand that? There was no logic. She wasn't particularly pretty but when I was with her, I felt at home. We knew each other without saying a word. I felt whole. She was from England. I like the way they talk. Of course loving her cost me. I sometimes think my wife got pregnant just to keep me dancing round the drum so to speak. She had the baby... a girl ... Caroline. I told her I was leaving her just after the birth. Hardest thing I ever did but it was truthful. Like Albee. You can't live with a lie. Lies are death. She was really upset, rightfully, and it cost me probably about three million dollars and a lot of time with lawyers. Worse thing was when she tried to turn the kids against me so they developed problems at school and so on. Still have parental rights but I don't see enough of them as I'd like. That play changed my life and it wasn't no imaginary kids either.

I knew Martha was ripe for a change. Her husband.. you know, travelling through Asia there was a lot of "opportunity." She was a fine actress, a lot of passion. I think she'd been unhappy before and it was easy to tap into all that anger and frustration. She was Martha. As good as Elizabeth Taylor. Seemed to hit it off nicely with George who had the British reticence until roused so to speak. Got that English always know better than you attitude. I'll let them speak for themselves. Honey? Well, she just had to be a bit silly and not the sharpest knife in the drawer and the actor... I can't remember her name... who portrayed her was perfect. I think she conceived during the play, and made this weird announcement to us all. So it certainly changed her. Nick? He was a good actor. He wanted to hump Martha so bad he almost did it on stage, in front of his wife. Method acting he called it. Him and George did not get on with each other which was just fine for the play.

I never did any more theatre after that..which was a pity because it was always my first love.

I always wanted to be a teacher, like George but I could never have put up with pittance they pay you. After a spell in Washington, Me and my new wife went back to live and work in Thailand... I liked it there. It's not like the US... everyone always striving to be richer, have a better house or car. Though I miss New Orleans... still got a house there in the French Quarter. I remember George asking me about what Martha was like and I told him, "What you see is what you get. She is as honest as the day is light and the night is dark. She doesn't hide anything." I didn't tell him about the sorrow. He could find that out for himself. Well, time for me to go. That oil doesn't come out of the ground on its own. It has to be wooed and coaxed like a woman.

*Exits.*

*(There's a rattle from the drum)*

*Honey comes into the spotlight pushing a stroller with a sleeping toddler*

#### **HONEY**

Can't stop. This is George. Say hello George. He's the shy one. Would you believe it, number three. There's Martha and Nick. We named them after the play. Appropriate don't you think, since that started it all? I always wanted a family. I'm an only child. I work part time now and I love being a mum. Who's Afraid? What do I think? Well, it's just a play, it's not real life. I don't know why people want to go to see plays where the characters tear each other to pieces. The director, Ken, told me I was a very good actor. The reviewer didn't mention my name which was strange. We're still in Singapore and happy here. My husband's job is good and we can afford help with the kids. I don't know how I would cope without my two maids from the Philipinnes. Speaking of which, I need to get home for dinner at one. Bye.

*Exit*

*The drums start rather processionally. Enter George wearing the same clothes as in the play.*

#### **GEORGE**

*(annoyed)*

What? Oh... The play? Did it change me? Jesus... It was a roller coaster. There were times I couldn't decide who I was. Was I George or was I me?

Was I in love with Martha? There's a rule in theatre you never get emotionally involved with another actor. You just don't do it because it's not real and it's unprofessional. You're in a play. Of course you try to feel things like falling in love imaginatively because it's written by the author and you have to be convincing on stage, make other people believe you, but you keep your personal feelings to yourself. That is so ridiculous. Look at Taylor and Burton, Vivian Leigh and Lawrence Olivier. How many acting couples have met each other on a set or in a play? I thought I knew what I was doing. Hell I was married. I had kids... I was a responsible teacher father.

She was married. Her husband was a successful businessman. I knew she had some problems. She'd lost a child. Downe's syndrome. We got to know each other. I believed we were good friends. You must not covet your neighbor's wife. No harm looking. No coveting. The play was fun. There we were hammering away at each other, angry, scheming, yelling, calculating and with these wonderful lines. It was poetry.

Ken, the director, kept telling us to find the love, at the end of every rehearsal that's what he said. Find the love. We found the love between George and Martha which gave us the humor. George and Martha's way of keeping themselves amused in all the sadness and banality of their lives. Doing a job, paying the bills, washing, cleaning. It wasn't tragic, it was funny. It was truth and illusion. That's where we all live. What do you ever really know about the person you marry or about your parents or about your children or about anybody? You don't. Bits and pieces. On stage? It's real in that moment and it's finite and Albee gives you the blood and guts of life and the audience knows it and accepts it and can go home happy.

What happened afterwards? It's strange. Like watching a movie in slow motion. There was a big birthday party sometime after the production closed. Everyone was dressed up, expat style, booze was flowing. Mary and I danced and danced and it felt warm and intimate to be together again and we didn't care who saw us. We were still George and Martha happy with our love. Happy the fighting was over. Then I was dancing with Mary's Jewish friend from New York, sharp as a needle, with a blue strapless dress which she would keep hitching up every thirty seconds. She'd come for Mary's birthday and she giggled a lot.

As the evening ended we were dancing with her head on my shoulder and she whispers in my ear "You're in love with each other." A bomb went off. I couldn't hear anything. I was deaf.

That's what happened. John disappeared eventually. Some BA stewardess. My wife got her degree and I told her I wanted a divorce. She said she needed to be married to someone so as soon as we divorced she married a man who sold pipes but, I tell you what... at that moment in my life, the light sparkled off the leaves on the palm trees every day, the sky looked bluer, the sea more inviting, the taste of food sharpened, everything changed.

We live in the States now. We have a theatre company. George and Martha... Glad, glad, glad.

*The light goes out. Strains of Jimmy Buffett's  
"There's somewhere over China, Hong Kong.. Etc...*

*Lights come up on Martha dressed as Mae West*

#### **MARTHA**

Is that a mouse in your pocket or are you just happy to see me Big Boy.

I never met a man I didn't like.

Truth and illusion George. Truth and illusion.

It was an easy birth, once it had been accepted, relaxed into. And I was younger.

*(sadly)*

And I was younger. George? A schoolteacher. Full of information. Packed with knowledgeable goodies and kind. I needed kindness. Women need kindness... You can't be a victim forever. Poor John, his mind trapped in the sewer of the Vietnam War, a green beret. I held him as he screamed through his nightmares holding the remnants of a friend's body. He was a manly man with good taste and style. And then

*(pause)*

Georgie Porgie pudding and pie came along, kissed the girls but never said goodbye. British. He loved me even when I told him my life. Even when I tried to make it work with John. Suddenly I grew up. Realised the truth.

If there's no love, you can't MAKE is work. It took me a long time to learn how to love someone.

Ladies? Who do you choose to wed? I had married at 20 because I thought I was in love. He was a dentist and we had a son but he ran off with his dental assistant and then I fell in love again and was going to travel the world. I gave up everything to join him. Stupid. Poor, poor, poor Mary poor Martha. I wanted a child with John I really wanted a child but it came unready for the world. Don't hurt me please. No more hurt. I have been hurt enough in one lifetime. I found a daughter. Tony's daughter. She wouldn't make my mistakes. I felt like a mother for the first time.

Out there, on the stage I can live in someone else's skin. I can feel a new life stirring in me. I don't have to remember my own unhappiness. My roles are like my children. I can do anything and everything and nothing and something and if I remember the lines, the world snaps to my control. And I can be happy, there on the stage, I am safe, performing another's sorrow or an another's happiness. I can be older. I can be younger. I can be British or American... anything the director and author want me to be.

And George, who is good to me, came to play with me, on the Stage. And the plays which are just dreams all eventually go Pouf! When the curtain comes down. Pouf. We act. George and Martha, Tony and Mary and we go pouf when the curtain comes down. In the theatre, the illusion of truth lives for a second. Fact and Fantasy. Love carries us into our future. George and Martha, Tony and Mary.. their journey, their fantasy, their truth. This was our wedding.

We're all somewhere over China

Headin' east or headin' west

Takin' time to live a little

*(Jimmy Buffet song comes in.  
George joins her. They sing  
together)*

Flying so far from the nest

Just to put a little distance

Between causes and effects

Like an ancient fortune teller

Knowin' who and what comes next.

*Exeunt as rapid drumming. Northern Lion dances onto the stage, takes up position CS, sits looks at the audience . Nods wisely and flutters eyes.*