

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

by
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*For Cynthia Marie
my brilliant, beautiful, bizarre bride*

ALBERT is a 37 year old man who avoids difficult issues in his relationship with his wife, Zinni.

ZINNI, On her 40th birthday, desperately wants to have a child but is unable to.



Both characters dislike listening. Often times their speech patterns crash into and roll over one another.

The setting is a large dining room, mostly empty, dark. A black cake, with most of its many candles burning, sits on a large dining table Down Center.

Throughout much of the play, the two characters sit at opposite ends of the table. Walls are only suggested by a hearth and fireplace that glows red, Stage Right. The Upstage wall is a long china hutch. Tall drapes hang over a window to suggest the Stage Left wall.

With branches of rosemary, flowers and garlic in many vases spread about, the cake, streamers hanging from the ceiling, and balloons rising from one of the two chairs at the dinner table, there is somewhat of a romantic, festive look to the room.

But the mood of the two people is the opposite.

(As they enter, ALBERT leads ZINNI with her eyes covered. Stretching her fingertips out in front of her, she reluctantly halts ahead. The lights come up, only slightly.)

ZINNI

I don't trust you.

ALBERT

That's what makes this so much fun!

ZINNI

We agreed and you went out and bought something expensive anyway. You can just take it back.

ALBERT

You're going to love it, Zinni!

ZINNI

I'm getting sick to my stomach. Is that what you want, Albert? Want me to get sick to my stomach so I can't eat?

ALBERT

You won't want to eat what I made for dinner anyway.

ZINNI

Is it meat? You cooked meat, didn't you.

ALBERT

It's not meat, I didn't cook meat. But you won't like it. You never do.

ZINNI

Oh, god. I can feel the heat from the candles! Am I that old I can feel the heat?

ALBERT

You're even older. Some of the candles went out.

ZINNI

Oh, god...

ALBERT

(Lighting the rest of the candles.)

Remind me to put the phone back on the hook. I took it off so there won't be any distractions.

ZINNI

What about the biggest distraction of all, the TV? It should be destroyed.

ALBERT

Let's not talk crazy, here, Zin.

ZINNI

I swear, one of these days I'm going to kill that thing...

ALBERT

Now, Honey. Don't talk that way about our only child...

(ALBERT uncovers ZINNI's eyes.)

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Voilà!

ZINNI

Beautiful. A black cake and a bonfire. Just beautiful.

ALBERT

Blow 'em out and let's start, OK?

(ZINNI picks up her plate and fans the candles out.)

ALBERT

You missed one.

(The smoke alarm goes off.)

ZINNI

Beautiful!

(ZINNI spits the last candle out.)

ALBERT

OK... That can be your piece.

ZINNI

My god. The candles set off the alarm! Let's get this over with.

(ZINNI serves the food as ALBERT fans the smoke alarm with his plate. He sings the first half of the happy birthday song without words, just La La La. He sings the last half with words in a crescendo of pomp.)

ZINNI (CONT'D)

You done? You through? Are you quite through, now?

ALBERT

(Singing)

And Many Mooooore!

ZINNI

Always got to get that last, little... Aren't you prickly today!

ALBERT

(Turning the lights on.)

Me! You've done nothing but complain all evening long! First my clothes weren't right, then the amount of money I spent on your present. Next it'll be the food.

ZINNI

You're dressed in jeans for my birthday, Albert.

ALBERT

We're eating at home, Zinni. You're the prickly one... It's your hormone shots. They're doing it to you again...

ZINNI

Don't use my shots as a scapegoat. These days everyone blames something else for their own problems. No one takes responsibility anymore! I'm proud to say I'm like this all the time!

ALBERT

You always spit on your birthday cake?

ZINNI

...OK. It's the hormone shots.

ALBERT

You're not like this all the time.

ZINNI

It's the shots. But I still want you to take back whatever it is you got me.

ALBERT

You want me to take your birthday present back? I'll take it back.

ZINNI

Really?

ALBERT

Of course. It's back! Now, come on, let's eat. Who knows, maybe you will like it.

(They eat.)

ZINNI

Did you get me something nice?

ALBERT

Very nice! But don't worry. On its way back even as we speak.

ZINNI

Good. Because I don't want anything lying around here reminding me that I'm forty years old, four decades old!... Nearly Half a Century Old!

(They both eat a few more bites.)

ZINNI

Well...

ALBERT

I knew you wouldn't like what I made you.

ZINNI

No. Not that.

ALBERT

What, then?

ZINNI

Well, What is it?

ALBERT

...It's pasta.

ZINNI

Not this. The thing. What is it?

ALBERT

What is what?

ZINNI

The birthday thing. What did you get me for my birthday?

ALBERT

You just told me to take it back.

ZINNI

Yeah, but I have a right to know what it is.

ALBERT

(Pushing food away.)

It's nothing less than the newest iPhone.

ZINNI

I already have one.

ALBERT

Sleek. Light. Can do anything!

ZINNI

I already have a cell phone.

ALBERT

(Pulling it out of his pocket.)

I've got it now... What?

ZINNI

I don't need a new cell phone, Albert. The one I have works perfectly well.

ALBERT

I know, I know. But this one is small! And it's Gunmetal!... And it has Nine Jillian Gigabytes!

ZINNI

I don't know how to use the one I have now. I'd never figure that one out.

ALBERT

(As he talks, he stacks his papers.)

I'm way ahead of you, Zin, way ahead. I collected every bit of information on the amazing things this baby can do: plays music in the shower, wakes you on the hour, takes you on a trip, wear it on your hip!

ZINNI

Thank you for taking it back, Albert.

ALBERT

How to use it in a car. How to use it in a bar. You can use it here or there. You can use it anywhere!

ZINNI

No. Thank. You.

ALBERT

Well, you see... This is the idea.

ZINNI

You're not taking it back, are you.

ALBERT

No. No, Just listen, first.

ZINNI

You told me you're taking it back but you're really not, right?

ALBERT

This is your birthday present!

ZINNI

I don't want something that expensive, Albert. I don't want anything! This birthday was a stupid idea to begin with.

ALBERT

Zinni, calm down and listen...

ZINNI

I hate it when you tell me to calm down...

ALBERT

Fine! Get excited, then. Just listen and hear me out... OK. My plan all along was I would keep this. I have this phone, you keep your old one.

ZINNI

...What kind of a stupid, cheap, self centered birthday present is that to give me, you self-centered cheap...

ALBERT

I thought...

ZINNI

Honestly, Albert! That is a selfish and cheesy way to give a birthday present!

ALBERT

Or you could keep this one and I'd take yours... I don't care...

ZINNI

We don't need another cell phone in this house!

ALBERT

We're a family, not a house. Besides, it's not the cell phone that's the present. Now, here's the good part: You listening? ...What you're getting is the 100 percent accessibility I'll have with this little baby. Think of it, Zin. No matter where I am, day or night, you'll be able to get a hold of me.

ZINNI

...Well, what was I thinking?! Now I see the deep significance of this gift! Getting a hold of you! Albert, first you would need something I'd actually want to get a hold of.

ALBERT

You're transferring again, Zinni... Dr. Banken told you not to transfer the hate you have for your body over to my body. After all, I'm the one that can make babies, remember?

(ZINNI stops dead, looking at ALBERT. He lowers his head and raises his hands as if to confess he was very wrong in saying that. She pours herself a full glass of wine and drinks it all as she gets away from the table.)

ALBERT (CONT'D)

I... I'm sorry. That was stupid... Stupid. I... I'll take the phone back. Tomorrow. First thing... Come on, Zin. I... I'm sorry. Come sit down. Have your birthday dinner. I'll go out and get you something cheep, if you like... I'll get you, a... Flowers or something. Come on.

ZINNI

If you really must give me something, you know what I want.

ALBERT

That's impossible. Let's be realistic, here, Zinni. It is physically im-poss-i-ble. Let's be happy with what we are... What we have now.

ZINNI

It doesn't have to be impossible. We could use a donor egg...

ALBERT

Donor eggs cost thousands of dollars that we don't have!

ZINNI

We could go back up to the University clinic...

ALBERT

Thousands of dollars...

ZINNI

They liked us up there...

ALBERT

That we don't have!

ZINNI

What about your great aunt Dot?

ALBERT

What about my great aunt Dot?

ZINNI

Well, she's really rich, Albert.

ALBERT

Yes...

ZINNI

And she's about due...

ALBERT

About due? She's not having children anytime soon, Zinni. She's 93 years old!

ZINNI

No! She's not due to have a child... She's about due to... You know... Pass.

(ZINNI makes a flapping motion with her hands. He mimics, confused.)

ALBERT

Pass...?

ZINNI

Pass on... Die!

ALBERT

What exactly does that have to do with getting a donor egg?

ZINNI

Well, you'll probably get some kind of inheritance...

ALBERT

Zinni!

ZINNI

She's going to die anyway. It's inevitable! What's so terrible about sending up a few prayers that it happens sooner than later?

ALBERT

You... You've been praying about killing off...? How long! How long have you been praying that my Dear Great Aunt Dot will die?

ZINNI

Just a few months...

ALBERT

A few months! That dear thing is barely a scrap of life as it is and you're stacking the cards against her? Aren't you a nice niece!

ZINNI

But she's so old...

ALBERT

Sure, but I think she likes it just where she is, thank you very much! What about your grandparents! They've lived a long and useless life. Why not pray for them to die?

ZINNI

Your grandparents are a lot richer than mine...

ALBERT

Don't you touch my grandparents with your death prayers! They're strong and healthy!

ZINNI

That can change over night! A fall off a stool here. A slip in the bathroom there. A meteorite falling out of the sky... If we're lucky, a car crash could take them both in one painless instant!

ALBERT

You've thought about this. You've actually planned it all out with... With Him! You're in cahoots with God! I hope He shows more sense than you do!

ZINNI

He hasn't so far...

ALBERT

Let's get this straight! I'm not praying for my grandparent's death just so you can make a baby!

ZINNI

It's us making the baby. Think of it as recycling! "From old ashes, comes new life." We could name our child Dot, or Phoenix!

ALBERT

Phoe!... I love my grandparents and I'm not putting any death hex on 'em! If you want someone to die, be constructive and pray that your mom and dad get hit by a Mack truck!

(Stunned silence.)

ZINNI

Don't you be stupid!

ALBERT

Yeah well, see what it's like?...

ZINNI

Talking like that will get us nowhere, Albert! I can't believe you just said that... My parents don't have nearly enough money.

ALBERT

...I think you've lost focus, Honey, I really do. Listen. Let's think logically, here. Let's try to think, to think like men.

ZINNI

I can't. I don't have what men use to think with.

ALBERT

Yeah, right. Very cute. Well, just pretend.

(ZINNI pretends to be a base male jock.)

ALBERT (CONT'D)

(Speaking quickly.)

Anyway. Let's be logical, here. You only have yourself to blame. I mean for the past 12 or so years you've allowed your kindergartners to become your own kids, like some giant mother hen or something. For years, you've used those little germ balls as your own. You know you have! And now you're old and you snap your fingers to have your own, but it's not working out, now, is it. Things have changed on the old home-front, haven't they. But now I'm greedy also because I like this quiet, free life, this thing that we've got go'n here. You know, doing whatever. Plus we have money and we can go on big vacations, if we ever wanted to, that is. And it's like this cell phone. I want it so I go out and get it! ...There! You see how everything comes into perfect focus when you think it through logically, like a man?

ZINNI

Lucky for you I understood none of that.

ALBERT

All I'm saying is...

ZINNI

Shhh-T-T-T-T! Quiet!

(ALBERT opens his mouth but ZINNI's fierce stare makes him rethink.)

ZINNI (CONT'D)

OK, forget the money, Albert! Suppose we didn't have to pay any money. Suppose, suppose we lived in a state that allowed insurance companies to pay for reproduction like they do for abortion. Just suppose. Would you use a donor egg then?

ALBERT

What, if insurance paid for it?

ZINNI

Yes!

ALBERT

Listen, Honey, I didn't marry a donor wife. I married you. Because I loved you. And I don't want to make a baby with anyone else!

ZINNI

You don't 'make it' with the donor. You never even see who she is! It's just like when we did our IVF cycles. All you do is donate your sample.

ALBERT

Whoa,whoa,whoa,whoa... "Donate my sample?" You make it sound like you're running some kind of nonprofit, charitable organization, here! (using his iPhone) "Hello, United Way? Yes. I'd like to donate my sample, please! ...Well I'd prefer more often than once a month... One lump sum? My gosh, is that really possible? I don't think I've got it in me, thank you anyway!"

ZINNI

What do you want me to say: 'Give it all you've got? Hold up your end of the bargain?'

ALBERT

Well...

ZINNI

'Take matters into your own hands?'

ALBERT

Ah, no, thank you.

ZINNI

'Show 'em what you're made of?'

ALBERT

I get it, already!

ZINNI

'Do what you do best?'

ALBERT

No!

ZINNI

'Have it your way!'

ALBERT

Enough!

ZINNI

Donating a sample is simple. You just go back up to the clinic...

ALBERT

I know what the procedure is, Zinni. We tried it with your own eggs, for the IVF cycles, remember?

ZINNI

That's what I just said...

ALBERT

For me, it means another trip back to that little magic room dominated by a black vinyl sofa. Donating my sample means fumbling through well dog-eared magazines that I normally wouldn't even touch, frantically cursing myself for not being ambidextrous. It means trying to pace myself so that I neither take too long, arousing suspicion outside about what decrepit acts are going on in there, nor should I be embarrassingly quick. It means not using any kind of lubricant for fear it may contaminate "my sample." Then, when I've, "taken matters into my own hands," it means I carry a little Chinese to-go carton down the hall where I delicately turn it over to a cute little brunette, with hazel eyes, who knows not to shake my hand. Considering everything, even the small positive reinforcement that's involved, donating my sample means an experience in humiliation.

ZINNI

Well, don't you have it rough. Meanwhile I was across the hall, laying on my back, knees in the air, while they sucked my lousy eggs out of me with an 18 inch needle! And that was only after you had given me hormone shots twice a day for three weeks! And the emotional roller coaster those put me on... Humiliating? Try dehumanizing! For some reason, Albert, I just can't feel sorry for you taking a trip to Black Vinyl Sofa Land.

ALBERT

I know... You got the worst of it...

ZINNI

Well then, why? If I get the worst of it, why can't you just go along and support me?

ALBERT

I don't know. It's the money. That's part of it, but...

ZINNI

But what?

ALBERT

But. Well I'm thinking that we've been trying for three years and, well it seems to me that it's... You know, out of our hands...

ZINNI

What do you mean, out of our hands? We're on the verge of making a child!

ALBERT

I mean God, Zinni. God! If God had meant for us to make a child by now...

ZINNI

Do not finish that sentence. Don't you dare finish that...

ALBERT

It's part of it, though. It's part of what I feel. You, of all people, should agree with me that God...

ZINNI

Stop right there. That's absurd! We don't have wings but we flew to Hawaii anyway, didn't we? You drive in your car every day to Seattle. Or is that also wrong?

ALBERT

No. I just have to think there's a plan, here. Something bigger than us...

ZINNI

But we can be part of that plan. You just can't pick and choose which technology comes from God. Either it all does or it all doesn't. Who cares! Albert... God gave me a brain to conceive what my body cannot. That's real. And it will not be any less of a miracle, a mysterious and beautiful miracle, if we have a baby using a donor egg.

ALBERT

You asked me. It's what I've been thinking.

ZINNI

I'm trying to create a baby for us! To bring life into this family, into this house, and you stop me at every turn!

ALBERT

Not true. I don't stop you from your New Age medicine garbage.

ZINNI

What New Age medicine?

ALBERT

This new olfactory idea of yours.

ZINNI

Aroma Therapy? That's not my idea. It's European. Everyone's talking about it on the web.

ALBERT

Zinni, honey, I really don't think inhaling rosemary and garlic all day long is going to help you ovulate a healthy egg.

ZINNI

It helped a couple in San Diego. She had the same exact problem I do.

ALBERT

How long did they use it?

ZINNI

Eight months.

ALBERT

Eight months! We've been using it for one week and already our home smells like a Chinese pharmacy!

ZINNI

Well, all the better. With over a billion people, the Chinese certainly know how to make babies!

ALBERT

Right... And with all this garlic around, we're also safe from werewolves.

ZINNI

I know it's a straw. I'm grasping at straws. That's all I have left if we don't use a donor egg. Are you going to stop Aroma Therapy now, too?

ALBERT

Honey, I don't stop you from anything... I didn't stop you from having two hundred and fifty dollar injections twice a day.

ZINNI

That's not fair, Albert. I got those for far less money over the Internet...

ALBERT

And I don't stop you from prowling the Internet each night or from sending email to people we've never even met about our personal sex life!

ZINNI

Making connections with other women like me is very important. It's a network, my only outlet! I need to communicate with someone.

ALBERT

But you "communicate" the exact moment you last ovulated, how we set the alarm clock for 3:30 AM so we wouldn't miss "our window of opportunity..." You "communicate" how many sperm I produce!... OK, OK, so I'm proud of how many sperm I produce. Two hundred and fifty million is nothing to sneeze at. But it's just a hair personal, don't you think?

ZINNI

No one knows who we are! We're just names on the Internet.

ALBERT

I have this recurring nightmare where I'm in line with a bunch of women at Metro Market using my Amex to buy ice cream and the checkout lady runs my credit card through the computer to see if it's good. We're all standing in line with nervous smiles. Then the computer makes this low drawn out whistle and flashes on its screen, "250 MILLION SPERM!" And the lady behind me says, "Oh, you must be Albert!" ...Then everyone applauds.

ZINNI

That's ridiculous!

ALBERT

There's no sex in making a baby any more, Zinni. With us it's become a regimented, quality controlled, product oriented, business...

ZINNI

We've got to stick to the schedule...

ALBERT

But in this business I get no relief!

ZINNI

Most men would love to be in your position.

ALBERT

My position?... My position has given me chronic back pain and robbed me of any ounce of moisture I have ever had. This is the mere carcass of a man you see before you...

ZINNI

You're going off the deep end, Albert...

ALBERT

I feel like an empty hand lotion dispenser!

ZINNI

Calm down...

ALBERT

You don't love me for my body... You just want my sperm!

ZINNI

Calm down and eat your dinner... (To herself) ...Sperm Boy.

(They continue to eat. As he eats, he grabs the iPhone and literature.)

ZINNI

People are so insensitive.

ALBERT

(Looking at the iPhone and eating.)

What?

ZINNI

Like Rebecca last week.

ALBERT

You saw Rebecca?

ZINNI

We went out to *Chez Sushi* for lunch. I told you. Remember, she showed up with her baby?

ALBERT

What was she supposed to do with it, leave it at home?

ZINNI

I asked her to leave it, but she brought it anyway. And she brought some friend of hers who I've never even met and who, now get this... Who is eight months pregnant! Think of it, Albert! Eight months pregnant! Don't you remember how mad I was?

ALBERT

No.

ZINNI

I had to sit across from this hippo pretending to be interested and concerned about all her little pregnant problems. I was sick to my stomach! Couldn't eat! So I left, came home early. You don't remember?

ALBERT

(Eating and reading, not looking up.)

No. No, I don't remember. People are so insensitive...

ZINNI

She made me feel like the time I saw that fat woman slap her little boy across his eyes in Metro Market...

ALBERT

People like that should go to Safeway.

ZINNI

This stranger went on and on about how difficult it is to get out of bed late at night, how her husband has to wash her in the bath tub because she can't reach any of her body parts. She had the nerve to tell me she was sick and tired of being pregnant and she wanted to just be done with the whole thing! I don't know what kept me from reaching right across that table and slapping that undeserving, fat piece of...

ALBERT

She's just as deserving as you are, Zinni.

ZINNI

She sat there and drank a San Joaquin Beaujolais, Albert! She went outside to have a smoke!

ALBERT

Well, that doesn't mean she's undeserving of having a child.

ZINNI

She's polluting her fetus!

ALBERT

Pregnant smokers have been giving birth to healthy babies for decades...

ZINNI

Whose side are you on, Albert? Because you can't be rooting for her and pretend to be on my side!

ALBERT

I'm not rooting for her. I just think that she...

ZINNI

Well don't think! Just agree!

ALBERT

I agree. I agree! Whatever this is about, I agree.

ZINNI

Real sincere, Albert... Listen: If you're not for me, you're against me!

ALBERT

I'm for you.

ZINNI

You don't sound very committed.

ALBERT

I'm as committed as you should be.

ZINNI

What do you mean by that?

ALBERT

Committed! You should be committed... To an institution! I mean listen, Honey... Your emotions are all up and down and sidewise. I can't keep track of you!

ZINNI

It's the medication...

ALBERT

And all we talk about anymore are your ovaries and my sperm... Your fallopian tubes and my sperm... Your hormone levels AND MY SPERM! These are not normal topics of dinner table conversation, Zinni. I don't remember ever once hearing my mom and my dad talk about fallopian tubes and sperm at the dinner table!

ZINNI

It's the most important thing in my life.

ALBERT

I know... I know it is. It is for me too. But, geez, we're chasing away all of our friends, Zinni... Like Rebecca. No one else wants to hear about our reproductive entanglements. But it is all, and I do mean all... It is all we ever talk about! I mean, geez... I'm even getting to the point where...

ZINNI

What. What point!

ALBERT

I just want to... I don't know. I want to go on with the rest of my life... Well, I mean, you know, together... With you.

ZINNI

...Well, I can't say I blame you. I didn't expect this, any of it. I've. It's really changed things. I've been very... For the past 34 months I've taken hormones to make multiple eggs and thicken my lining. For 34 months I've prepared a place for life to begin inside me. But, life failed 34 times. For me, each... Every one of those months ended in death. But each time there was no one to share it with...

ALBERT

I've always...

ZINNI

No pastor to say words... No one to mourn with me. Even you said my actual miscarriage felt like a death to you. Well, I've been through 34 of those. So you'll, you'll just have to forgive me if the hormone shots and giddy expectations and unrelenting grief have me... They have me...

(ALBERT reaches towards ZINNI but she closes herself to him. He tries to eat. She drinks her glass empty. He refills her glass with wine.)

ALBERT

Can you have alcohol?

ZINNI

It's not our window of opportunity.

ALBERT

Good. This is a time you're supposed to be happy, Zin. I don't want you to be like this. Just... It's your birthday, for crying out loud. Let's... Let's forget about that other stuff and celebrate. Let's celebrate you, OK?

(ZINNI nods. He serves more food to both plates and they eat.)

ALBERT (CONT'D)

So, what did you get me?

ZINNI

What?

ALBERT

For your birthday, remember? You said your 40th would be something special so you'd get me something. I'm getting you flowers, cheap flowers, remember?

ZINNI

Oh. That.

ALBERT

I'll go pick dandelions or something... So what did you get me?

(ZINNI leaves the table and goes to the china hutch. She comes back with a thin gift, nicely wrapped.)

ZINNI

Well, you might be disappointed. I stuck to a price lid. In fact, this was free...

(She hands Albert the small package, flat and thin. He hesitates.)

ZINNI (CONT'D)

The best presents come in small...

ALBERT

I know what this is... A mirror so I can gaze at myself...

(He opens it.)

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Oh, my... This is old.

ZINNI

Found it in the hall closet.

ALBERT

This was our first camping trip, right? When we went to the coast and...

ZINNI

It's our honeymoon.

ALBERT

Yeah. That's what I meant. Look at me. Oh, jeez, I was thin and attractive...

ZINNI

We both were...

ALBERT

Look how your eyes laugh and sparkle, here. Your face is... What's the word?

ZINNI

Happy.

ALBERT

Yeah. Happy. Boy, that was a long time ago.

ZINNI

Fifteen years.

ALBERT

Look how animated you are. How alive...

ZINNI

How alive I was, you mean... We had everything to look forward to then. No problems, just future.

ALBERT

It's still that way. This is just a hump, Zinni. A big hump, I mean it's important and everything, but it's just a hump.

ZINNI

If we don't have a child, we will forever be childless. That's no hump, Albert. It's a mountain range.

(A Pause while she drinks her glass dry.)

ZINNI (CONT'D)

Last Saturday I was sitting on the corner at Starbucks, watching people walk down Proctor when a woman came by with her little girl. She was maybe two. Her hair was blond silk and her cheeks were round... I watched my hand, like it was someone else's, reach out and caress her hair. Like touching nothing. Her mom watched, smiling. Then she asked. Came right out and asked me. She said, "Do you have a child of your own?" What else could I say?... "Yes," I lied. And she held open the glass door for her daughter, and she smiled at me. And for that moment I was that woman's equal. We were colleagues. I was whole... I want to be whole, Albert. I need to be a whole family. I would be such a beautiful mother. But I can't stand it anymore, now. I hate being alone. I hate the 34 deaths. I hate my body! I HATE God!

ALBERT

Zinni...

ZINNI

No! I want my baby! Some women who deserve nothing have a whole litter of kids. From day one I've done everything right. Waited for a husband. Waited for a home. Waited for money. I take care of my body; eat fish and prenatal vitamins every damned...

ALBERT

Zinni, please...

ZINNI

I devote my life to teaching other people's kids...

ALBERT

Stop it now, Zinni...

ZINNI

I deserve a child!

ALBERT

Will you listen to...

ZINNI

But I deserve a...

ALBERT

Listen, just listen for once... I hate THIS!... It scares the hell out of me, how you go on... Honey, this isn't about deserving. There's no such thing as deserving, here. This is about coping. Coping, Zinni. We cope. Deserving is a mirage. If you got

ALBERT (CONT'D)

what you deserved, Zinni, you'd be living in a castle in Europe with children on every floor, in every room. Instead, you live with me, in Tacoma.

ZINNI

I can't cope anymore. I'm to the end and I think I'll do something bad.

ALBERT

What do you mean, "Something Bad?"

ZINNI

I need to at least have the chance with a donor egg. I need that, Albert. If nothing comes from it... I'll always know I did as much as I could, that... That nothing else was...

ALBERT

I know. I know all that, but what do you mean, "You'll do Something Bad?"...

ZINNI

I'll hold on to that...

ALBERT

Yes. I know, but...

ZINNI

Albert, I'm asking you. Listen. Can't I please have that chance? Please.

ALBERT

...I need time to think...

ZINNI

You've had years.

ALBERT

No I haven't. I've not been thinking. I've just been moving along, agreeing, following... And now here we are: To mix myself with someone else.

(Starts to drink but puts it down.)

ALBERT (CONT'D)

OK, listen. Let's talk about it. No, I mean really discuss it, this Saturday. We'll take the whole day. I swear we'll talk about it until we reach a conclusion, together.

ZINNI

But we've already been...

ALBERT

And until then, let's think about what's important, here Zinni, what the ultimate issue is for both of us. You think about what's important to you about using a donor egg, I'll work on what's important to me about not using one. But we will come to a conclusion this Saturday.

ZINNI

But...

ALBERT

And you know what else?...

ZINNI

More of the same...

ALBERT

Until then I'll try... I will try my best to put myself in your position, to see what you're thinking, how you feel. And you do the same for me. And I'll write all this stuff down, what I think. And you too. Everything, Zinni. We'll write it all down and we'll bring it together Saturday morning and read it over and talk about it, I mean we'll really discuss it. And we will come to a conclusion. But I'll be honest, Zin... I think using a donor egg is more important to you than not using one is to me. I mean... You know what I mean?...

(ZINNI nods.)

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Yeah. You do. You understand me. OK. OK, then! ...Saturday! First thing. And we'll... We'll come to a conclusion.

(A long Pause while ALBERT looks at his picture.)

ALBERT (CONT'D)

I remember the very first time I saw you.

ZINNI

What?

ALBERT

I can still see you coming through that stage door. The actual moment I first laid eyes on you...

ZINNI

What are you talking about, stage door?

ALBERT

Our rehearsal. We were in Olson Auditorium, remember? I was in the tenor section. You came in, carrying your violin like, like it was a banner or something. Your hair was longer than it is now. I don't remember your blouse but your jeans, they were tattooed to that thin, little butt you had. I kept thinking, "She is cute. Small everything. Cute everything..." You sat in front of the conductor. Very distracting. A whole year later I actually talked to you. That was on Red Square. Remember?

ZINNI

When I brushed you off?

ALBERT

(Nodding.)

Things work weird. Back in college, I thought you were cute, small physique, pert. But since I've gotten to know you, know your passions. Since I've lived with you now for one and a half decades...

ZINNI

You think I've become an ugly old hag.

ALBERT

...I think you're the most beautiful, sensitive, intelligent... Bizarre woman I have ever known.

ZINNI

Bizarre!?

ALBERT

A Freak! In an interesting way, though. It's a challenge to keep up with you, Zin. A good challenge. You're interesting.

(Slowly, they embrace.)

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Whad'ya say we go give it the ol' college try.

ZINNI

Now?

ALBERT

Why not?

ZINNI

It's not our window of opportunity.

ALBERT

Oh, I think it is.

(He begins to carry her Up Center.)

ZINNI

Are you sure you can?... I mean, without a black vinyl sofa and dog-eared magazines and all?

ALBERT

I'll try my best... I'll try my best.

(Kissing, they pass the china hutch, Zinni's hand reaches out and grabs a vase of rosemary and garlic and holds it up, behind Albert as they EXIT. Fade to BLACK except for the picture on the table, which remains aglow.)

THE END.