

THE BUDDHA'S WIFE 8 1 19

A full-length play in two acts

by

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SYNOPSIS:

Yasodhara, wife of Siddhartha (the Buddha), introduces herself and her 2500-year-old story alongside Diane, a contemporary PhD candidate and rising star in feminist studies. Their stories interweave as both women are trapped at home with newborns, abandoned by their husbands who leave home to pursue a greater purpose. Moving fluidly through time and place, *The Buddha's Wife* juxtaposes the women's struggles, expectations, and choices, explores the meanings of love and friendship, and crosses their paths in ways they could never have foreseen.

CHARACTERS:

DIANE BREWSTER: female, 20 - 30, driven, intellectual, articulate, attractive

YASODHARA: female, 16 - 30, smart, accomplished, beautiful

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA: male, plays both JUSTIN GALLAGHER, 33, focused, kind; and SIDDHARTHA, 18-33, sensitive, aristocratic

TRACY/MITA: female, plays both TRACY, 20 - 30, Diane's best friend, wise and sardonic; and MITA, 16 - 30, Yasodhara's best friend, loyal and bold

BAXTER/KING: male, plays both BAXTER, 20 - 30, smart, privileged; and the KING, Yasodhara's father, 40s, powerful, genial

SETTING:

The United States, from 15 years ago to present, and India, circa 500 BC. The chronology of the play flows back and forth between those two time periods and locations, occasionally presenting both simultaneously in a place referred to as "the liminal space."

The set should be very simple, with only suggestions of location. An archway would be nice, as would a window, and a wall.

Furniture is minimal -- something that can serve as couch, bench, and bed is needed.

The right white cloth(s) might serve as a dishcloth, headcovering, scarf, shawl, bridal veil, pregnancy, baby blankets, etc.

*"Remember, Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did,
but backwards and in high heels."*

--Bob Thaves

ACT 1

SCENE 1

Darkness.

YASODHARA (V.O.)

"About two thousand six hundred years ago Maharajah Suprabuddha reigned over the Koliya race."

SPOTLIGHT up on YASODHARA as she enters the liminal space, holding an open book. She is bald and she wears a saffron colored robe.

So begins an account of my life. It's a very nice version, actually. See? Published in 1929, with gorgeous color illustrations...

There aren't many accounts of me. Two thousand six hundred years is a long time ago, and let's be honest: I'm not the one people want to know about. But since you're here...

(reads)

"Maharajah Supra Buddha reigned over the Koliya race." That's my father, the King. I find it... *interesting* that a book devoted to my life would start with my father. Not me.

SOUND of dishes clattering in a sink.

YASODHARA

That's NOT my father the King, or me. That's Diane. She's never heard of me. Not yet.

LIGHTS up on DIANE, 30, wiping her hands with a cloth/dishtowel. She speaks to an unseen child at her side:

DIANE

Am I what, hon? Angry at the dishes? No...

She crouches down and speaks sweetly.

The dishes are simply a material representation of the deep resentment and anger I feel about sublimating my ambitions in life.

(pause)

That means "the dishes are our friends." Yes, they are. Okay, Rebecca. Off to brush your teeth. I'll be right there.

She stands and looks up.

DIANE (CONT'D)

(to the skies)

It's a valid question. I don't ever remember asking you that question, though, Dad. You never once complained about doing the dishes.

YASODHARA

(indicates book)

As this version of my story goes, when I was little, my father consulted an astrologer. What. Astrologers were a BIG DEAL back then. Anyway, he prophesied that my life would be greater than a queen's. My father... well, here:

(reads)

"answered proudly, "Higher than a queen! Why, she is so already. I know she is an extraordinarily beautiful child and that she will be a marvelously lovely woman." Remember, 1929.

DIANE

Remember how in fourth grade I sold the most Girl Scout cookies of anyone in my troop? -- I had my picture in the paper.

YASODHARA

He gave me the finest education -- I learned to dance, to ride and shoot, to sing and play the veena. It's kind of like a guitar.

DIANE

And then the summer after that I read the most books in the library's Thirty-Day Reading Challenge?

YASODHARA

When I asked him for a garden, he let me design my very own, with flowers and fountains.

DIANE

But the best was the start of fifth grade, when I was elected Captain of the Safety Patrol.

YASODHARA

I led a completely privileged life. But I found the most joy in nursing the sick and bringing food to those who were hungry. The people of our town, Koli Raj, called me "the luck of the state" because of that. That made my father beam.

DIANE

Oh my god, you were so proud of me. You believed I could do anything. I can still hear your voice: "Diane, there's no stopping you. Why," and your eyes got all lit up with excitement, "Why, you could be..."

KING

Yes! Dead center! Congratulations, my son. You have distinguished yourself today, in all realms: arithmetic, music, and now, archery.

(she nods)

We are all eager to know your identity; perhaps most eager of all is my beautiful daughter Yasodhara, yes?

(she nods again)

But first, you have one last task. You must recite for us.

She bows, then speaks to the crowd in a low voice:

YASODHARA

"Two birds,
Golden hued and beautiful of wing
Cling to a common branch.
One has eaten of the sweet and bitter fruit of the tree
And laments his freedom,
The other has flown far and fast only to return,
Hungry for the sight of his companion.
The song they share on that common branch tells the truth:
They have always been, will always be
But one."

KING

Well done, my son. You have proven yourself more than worthy to join the royal family. And now, we shall all know your identity...

Yasodhara removes the mask.

Yasodhara!

SPOT on Yasodhara, King freezes.

YASODHARA

(to audience)

Other versions say that Siddartha won my hand in marriage. I like this a lot better.

SPOT out.

(to King)

Father--

KING

(whispered fiercely)

How dare you!

YASODHARA

Please--

KING

Silence!

(to the crowd)

My deepest apologies, to the suitors and their families. I am as shocked as you are. I beg your forgiveness for my daughter's shameful actions. Let not your estimation of our kingdom be tainted by this... this childish display. Please. Eat, drink... let the festivities continue...

The king hustles her off to the side. She stands with head bowed, then eventually looks up.

KING (CONT'D)

I-- I am stunned...

YASODHARA

I am sorry. I know I have dishonored you--

KING

Dishonor... this is a disgrace. How will I explain this to our guests?

YASODHARA

It is all my fault. I will apologize to them--

KING

It is not YOU who will be the laughingstock of Koli Raj. How could you do such a thing? Do you not know who you are? Who we are?

YASODHARA

Yes,--

KING

It is my own fault for indulging you with so many lessons.

YASODHARA

No!

KING

Then what? What were you thinking?

YASODHARA

(kneels at his feet)

Only... only of myself, father. I see that now. I am not worthy to call myself your daughter.

KING

Hmph.

YASODHARA

It is true.

(placing her head to his feet)

I bow in humble apology.

KING

Well.

He pauses for effect. Eventually:

You may rise, Yasodhara. Of all your lessons, let this be your greatest.

YASODHARA

It will.

(pause)

Honored father, since I have won the tournament, may I ask you a question?

KING

What does the tournament-- Oh, no. Not again.

YASODHARA

Father, I--

KING

Yasodhara, we will not discuss this.

YASODHARA

Please--

KING

You know my answer. You have many freedoms, perhaps too many. This one you may not have. Hm?

YASODHARA

Please, father, please let me choose--

KING

Enough!

(She lowers her head.)

Why must you make me bark at you?

(She shrugs.)

So this is why you won the tournament.

(She nods.)

Oh, my beautiful little goat, you are too smart for your own good. Now.

(He lifts her chin.)

Tell me how you did it.

YASODHARA

Did what?

KING

All this. Fooled us all. Come. Eat with me, and tell me everything.

YASODHARA

May I bring Mita?

KING

Yes, bring her along. Was she part of this game?

YASODHARA

Are you still angry?

He shrugs, then shakes his head no.

Then yes, she was. (shouts) Mita!

She runs off. He watches her, exits.

SCENE 2

Music from 15 years ago. U.S. College dorm hallway, one door from which Diane, 20, emerges. Music is loud from her room. She carries a shawl and her writing.

DIANE

(shouts over her shoulder:)

No, it's fine! Really. Have fun.

She shuts the door firmly. Music is still fairly loud. She opens the door, sticks her head in.

Ah-- would you mind turning it down just a smidge?

Music goes way down.

Oh! Wow, that's gr--

Music goes way up.

Okay, very funny--

Music goes up and down quickly over and over.

Argh!!

She slams the door, sits in the hallway, puts the shawl around her shoulders, writes. The music goes down, the door opens, and TRACY sticks her head out.

TRACY

Hey. Sorry Di. It was--

(loudly, so the room behind her can hear)

--that asshole Robert--

(loud boos as she is pulled from behind)

--hey! Stop! Let go!

(exploding into giggles)

Stop! Sorry...

She is pulled back into the room, the door shuts. The music isn't quite so loud. Diane writes. BAXTER enters, dressed for a party, holding two ties.

DIANE

Ooh, look at Mr. Schmancy.

BAXTER

What do you think?

DIANE

That one.

She goes back to writing.

BAXTER

Really? It's a little... something...

DIANE

I like it.

BAXTER

Good enough for me.

(begins to tie it)

Beautiful, brilliant-- AND a keen fashion sense. You're like a Bond girl.

DIANE

Yep. Lucky me.

BAXTER

No, no -- lucky me. I get to wake up next to you every morning.

She looks at him, deadpan.

Next door is next to you.

(sings)

Can't get next to you, babe -- can't get next to you.

DIANE

Don't you have a party to go to?

BAXTER

Do I detect a hint?

DIANE

Baxter. Go.

BAXTER

You're a cruel beauty, Diane. Come with me.

DIANE

I'm busy.

BAXTER

Sylvia can do that.

DIANE
Sylvia?

BAXTER
My father's secretary.

DIANE
God, that's appalling on so many levels.

BAXTER
You're just crabby because you've apparently got nothing better to do on a Saturday night than write a miserable paper on--

(looks over her shoulder)
"The Heroine's Quest: A Feminist Response to Coelho's The Alchemist"-- oh, shit--

DIANE
Hey! Go away.

BAXTER
Feminist response to Coelho? You must be joking. Isn't that some hokey self-help parable, filled with platitudes? A response? Really?

DIANE
Really. Do you realize what a sensation this book caused?

BAXTER
Nope.

DIANE
It was huge. Translated into every language, sold all over the planet. It's still one of the best-selling books of all time. For that alone, it deserves a response.

BAXTER
So what's your response?

DIANE
How much time do you have?

BAXTER
Give me the Cliffs Notes.

DIANE
Everything on a silver platter...

BAXTER
(laughs)
Shut up. So?

DIANE

(excited, passionate)

So Coelho's idea of a "Personal Legend" is yet another manifestation of a patriarchal agenda masquerading as a simple, colloquial fable. What did you call it? A "hokey self-help parable"? Yes! AND its accessibility to the masses only maximizes its power to confine one gender to personal stagnation, while the other fulfills its destiny through the vehicle of a heroic quest--

BAXTER

--this is the Cliffs Notes?--

DIANE

You shut up. If a lump of lead or copper can have a "personal legend" -- which according to Coelho, it does -- it aspires to being gold -- then surely the same must apply to both genders.

BAXTER

Do you want to be gold?

DIANE

Ugh! I want to be alone. Go be obnoxious somewhere else.

BAXTER

I like it, Di.

DIANE

You do? Really?

BAXTER

I do. It's compelling.

DIANE

Thank you, Bax.

BAXTER

Come with me--

DIANE

I can't.

BAXTER

Come on--

DIANE

No.

BAXTER

(sings)

Oh, please, Di-ana...

DIANE

No.

BAXTER

I'll keep singing cheesy oldies--

DIANE

I'll go down to the lounge--

BAXTER

I'll follow you--

DIANE

I'll write in the women's bathroom--

BAXTER

I'll-- I'll wear fishnets and a leather skirt.
(They both laugh.)

DIANE

It's almost worth it--

BAXTER

Isn't it?

DIANE

But no. Go on. Go.

He slowly gets to his feet. She writes.

BAXTER

Alright, well, what can I do? Clearly you would rather sit in this frigid hallway, scribbling away like some Bronte sister... than come dancing with me.

(She looks up.)

Oh, didn't I mention that before? Yeah, the invitation said there's dancing. Okay, well, have fun writing!

DIANE

Baxter.

BAXTER

Hmm? What. It's true! Would I lie?

(beat)

Right now?

DIANE

I hate you.

BAXTER

All RIGHT! Now we're getting somewhere. Go put on a party frock--

Wait. DJ or live? DIANE

Live. BAXTER

What kind of band? DIANE

Just get gussied up. We're leaving in ten. BAXTER

You're a terrible influence. DIANE
(gathering her stuff)

Isn't it wonderful? Someday you'll thank me. BAXTER

SCENE 3

*India, later that afternoon. Suggestion of a garden.
Yasodhara races in, Mita following.*

I won! YASODHARA

No fair! MITA

Yes it was! YASODHARA

No. You didn't eat as much as I did. MITA
(They laugh.)

Fine. Let's race again later. YASODHARA

Oh, I'll just let you win again. MITA

"Let me"? Let me? YASODHARA

You're the princess. MITA

Stunned, Yasodhara searches Mita's face.

Oh, look at you. Sad "little goat." No, I don't "let" you win.

YASODHARA

Ever?

MITA

Ever. I couldn't beat you if Lakshmi herself gave me wings.

(pause)

So. You wanted to show me something.

YASODHARA

Yes! Ooh... alright. Close your eyes. Over here...

(Yasodhara leads her)

Now... open.

Mita opens her eyes. A beat, while they both stand there, looking.

MITA

It's a statue.

YASODHARA

Yes, I know that.

MITA

Nice. I know, let's go swimming--

YASODHARA

Wait wait wait. You're not looking at it.

MITA

I am looking at it!

YASODHARA

You're not seeing it.

MITA

Fine.

YASODHARA

Really look. At the face, in particular.

MITA

All right.

Mita stares impassively, then her face begins to change.

Wait...

YASODHARA

Yes?

MITA

It looks like... it's--

YASODHARA
(about to burst)

Yes?

MITA

No, I'm dreaming.

YASODHARA

What.

MITA

Well, it just looks like... like your cousin. Siddhartha.
(Yasodhara smiles crazily)

You are in love!

YASODHARA

No, I'm not--

MITA

Yes you are. No one smiles like that unless they are.
(Yasodhara laughs crazily)

Look at you! Why didn't you tell me sooner? Does he know?

YASODHARA

Siddhartha? No! I worship from afar.

MITA

And your father?

(Yasodhara looks at her
significantly)

No, of course not...

(something dawns)

Ohhh! The tournament!

YASODHARA

Yes, my friend.

MITA

Why didn't you tell me your real purpose?

YASODHARA

I don't know...

MITA

I forgive you.

(with determination)

Alright. We must do something.

YASODHARA

Mita.

MITA

We must have a plan.

Mita. YASODHARA
MITA
 What. I know, you will write a letter to Siddhartha. No, I
 will write the letter, so that your father--
YASODHARA
 Mita!
MITA
 What.
YASODHARA
 Calm yourself. All will be well.
MITA
 It will if we have a plan.
YASODHARA
 Listen. Hello, Mita...
(Mita finally focuses)
 There is already a plan.
MITA
 There is?
YASODHARA
 Yes.
MITA
 Wonderful. What is it.
YASODHARA
 I have no idea.
MITA
 What is wrong with you?
YASODHARA
 Nothing!
MITA
 You're insane.
YASODHARA
 Mita, just because I don't know the plan, doesn't mean there
 is none.
MITA
 Oh, no.
YASODHARA
 What.

MITA

Please don't tell me it is the plan of Brahman.

YASODHARA

But it is!

MITA

Then why did you try to win the tournament? Why didn't you simply wait for Siddhartha to fall from the sky into your lap?

YASODHARA

I don't know. Perhaps because I'm human.

MITA

Are you not human still?

YASODHARA

So?

MITA

So, you must continue to try.

YASODHARA

Mita--

The King enters.

KING

Ah, there you are.

YASODHARA

Hello, father.

KING

Am I interrupting?

YASODHARA

No. We were simply talking--

MITA

We were arguing, sir.

KING

You two? Arguing?

YASODHARA

We weren't arguing, we were discussing--

MITA

Disagreeing--

YASODHARA

About nothing important--

MITA

True, that's true.

KING

(suspicious)

About what.

YASODHARA

Ah...

MITA

About... the nature of Brahman, sir. Should we continue to... plan our lives, or should we simply allow Brahman to create our lives for us.

KING

I have clearly given you both FAR too many liberties.

(beat)

Yasodhara, I have news for you.

YASODHARA

Yes, father.

KING

And I want NO opposition or complaint, am I understood?

YASODHARA

Yes, father.

KING

Good. King Suddhodana is hosting a festival. A hundred royal families have been invited-- he is anxious to find a princess of pure birth and matchless beauty. His son, Siddhartha, will choose her for his bride.

SPOT on Yashodhara, others freeze.

YASODHARA

This festival is mentioned in all the legends about me.

SPOT out.

(pause)

KING

You will go to this festival.

YASODHARA

(sneaking a look at Mita)

Yes, father. If I must.

KING

(surprised)

Good! Well. That is all.

He exits. Mita and Yasodhara explode with laughter, Mita hugs Yasodhara.

MITA

What luck!

YASODHARA

Is it? Or is the plan, my friend?

MITA

It's just luck. Deciding what to wear is the plan. I'll be right back.

Mita hurries off. Lights and set change during the following, to suggest King Suddhodana's palace. An archway. SPOT on Yashodhara.

YASODHARA

The legends say that Siddhartha met each one of the hundred girls, but wasn't smitten with any of them.

Mita returns during the following, carrying a scarf, which she carefully arranges on Yasodhara, and a flower, which she places in Yasodhara's hair. Mita exits.

He gave a necklace to each of them, like some sort of consolation prize. These legends also say that I came rushing in late, saying something like,

(whiny)

"Don't I get a necklace?"

(back to normal)

Okay, that's a bit of an exaggeration, but really. That's not how it happened.

Siddhartha appears behind her in an archway. SPOT out. She turns quickly, sees him.

YASODHARA (CONT'D)

Oh!

(she bows, flustered)

Kind sir.

SIDDHARTHA

Please.

He approaches, motions for her to arise; she does.

You are Yasodhara, yes?

(she nods)

You left the parade.

YASODHARA

I'm returning now, Prince.

Why did you leave?
SIDDHARTHA

I-- ah--
YASODHARA

It's all right.
SIDDHARTHA

There was a child. He was crying, alone -- he looked lost.
So I took his hand and helped him find his mother...
(he smiles broadly at her)
What.
YASODHARA

You are kind.
SIDDHARTHA

Thank you.
YASODHARA

As well as beautiful.
SIDDHARTHA

She smiles. They stare at each other, not moving. A beat. And another.
Why do I...
YASODHARA

We are cousins.
SIDDHARTHA

Yes, but--
YASODHARA

I know.
A bird sings.
That is beautiful.
SIDDHARTHA

What is.
YASODHARA

Did you not hear the birdsong?
SIDDHARTHA

I hear nothing but the sounds that your perfect mouth makes.
YASODHARA

Really. Alright, then.
She whistles the same tune as the bird.

SIDDHARTHA

I heard that. Listen.

(whistles it back to her)

See?

YASODHARA

Well done. I am honored.

SIDDHARTHA

No, I am.

(suddenly)

I must give you something!

YASODHARA

I don't need--

SIDDHARTHA

No! I must! I want to!

YASODHARA

(laughing)

All right!

SIDDHARTHA

What do you love? Jewels? Pearls? Anything you want, I will give you.

YASODHARA

I love flowers.

SIDDHARTHA

Yes! Of course!

(leaving)

Wait here--

YASODHARA

Forever! But I have--

He runs out. She takes the flower from her hair, smells it, waits. A few moments later, he returns empty-handed, still looking around wildly.

SIDDHARTHA

I couldn't find...

(sees her flower)

You must think me idiotic.

YASODHARA

No. Passionate, thoughtful... perhaps a little impulsive.

(she gives him the flower)

Not idiotic.

SIDDHARTHA

Thank you. I guess all I can give you is this.

He offers his hand. She places her hand in it.

Yasodhara, I've been waiting for you.

YASODHARA

And I, you.

SIDDHARTHA

Will you be my life's companion?

YASODHARA

I am thine already.

SIDDHARTHA

Come. Let's find our fathers.

They exit.

SCENE 4

*U.S., 3 years later. A reception hall bathroom.
Lights up on Tracy, the bride, throwing up. Diane is
holding Tracy's veil back from her face.*

TRACY

Ooooooh, god.

DIANE

Flush it down--

TRACY

I can't--

(she heaves again)

DIANE

Flush it Trace! So it doesn't splash!
(Tracy flushes it)

Good girl--

TRACY

Oh my god, shoot me now.

DIANE

Deep breaths. In and out, nice and easy.

TRACY

(takes a shallow breath in)

Ohmygod.

(another in)

Ohmygod.

(one more)
Ohmygod.

DIANE
Deep!

TRACY
I can't. Some boa constrictor designed this dress.

DIANE
Well let's unzip you--

TRACY
No! I'll never get back into it!

DIANE
Yes you will. Stand up.

Tracy stands, Diane unzips the back of Tracy's dress.

There, just a little.

Tracy breathes deeply, exhales.

TRACY
Free at last! Free at last! Thank godalmi-

DIANE
Stop! That is so WRONG.

TRACY
You're right.

DIANE
Come on. Let's clean you up. Brides aren't supposed to be barf-stained.

Diane cleans off the front of the dress.

TRACY
No? Something old, something new, something pukey, something...

(looks in the mirror)
Green. My face is green. Ugh. Thanks, Di.

DIANE
You're welcome.
(Pause. As Diane is still cleaning:)

TRACY & DIANE (CONT'D)
You don't have to do this.

They laugh.

Clean the dress-- DIANE (CONT'D)

Get married, right-- TRACY

Right-- DIANE

Oh, I like that. I know, Di. I know I don't. TRACY

Really? DIANE

Really. My god, you look so worried, Di! Don't you believe me? TRACY

No, I do. DIANE

This is what I want. It's what I've always wanted. TRACY

I know-- DIANE

Minus the hangover. Ugh. Look. Can I be honest here? TRACY

You're the bride. DIANE

Like I need that excuse. You know I love you and all that crap, right? But you and I are like total opposites-- TRACY

True-- DIANE

Right? So even if I think that you should stop dicking around and marry that poor bastard Baxter, buy a house next to me, have a mess of kids and grow old next door to Robert and me -- even if I think that-- TRACY

Total hypothetical-- DIANE

Total. I still wouldn't say it, because even though it may be what I want, I know that's not what you want. TRACY
(Beat.)

DIANE
That was brilliant.

TRACY
Thank you. Psych major.

KNOCK on the door.

DIANE
We'll be right out.

Pause.

TRACY
Have you told him yet?

DIANE
No. I don't want to ruin your wedding.
(beat; sees her)
Wow zow. You look... gorgeous.

TRACY
Oh, go on. Thanks.

DIANE
You ready?

TRACY
Good to go. Oxygen is a wonderful thing.

DIANE
Let's do it.

*Tracy braces herself, inhales deeply, then exhales.
Motions for Diane to zip her up, which she does with
some effort.*

DIANE (CONT'D)
And... done.

TRACY
(in a choked whisper)
Great. Let's go. I'm probably not setting the right example
for you, am I.

DIANE
Have you ever?

TRACY
Good point.

DIANE
You know I love you and all that crap, too.

TRACY

I know you do. Oh my GOD let's do this so I can change into sweatpants!

Diane opens the door.

DIANE

After you--

TRACY

Not too far, I hope.
(pleased with herself)
Get it?

DIANE

I get it.

They exit.

Lights shift. It is now evening. Fast dance music plays from the reception hall. Baxter, in a tuxedo, and Diane enter through an archway onto a veranda with a bench, next to a lake. They fan themselves. She carries a bouquet.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Whew!

BAXTER

Much better.

DIANE

Let's take a break.

BAXTER

One more. Please?

DIANE

Okay.

BAXTER

Great. Stay here.

He exits out the archway.

DIANE

(looks up)

Help me out here, Dad. When should I tell him about UCLA?

The music changes, to "As Time Goes By."

DIANE (CONT'D)

Okay, not now...

He returns.

BAXTER
How's that. Great, huh?

DIANE
Did you pay the DJ?

BAXTER
Isn't it better?
(she nods)
So let's not worry about it.
(he extends his hand)
May I?

DIANE
Of course.

They dance slowly together.

This is nice.

DIANE (CONT'D)
It is.

BAXTER
Tracy and Robert looked really happy.

DIANE
They are.

BAXTER
"Happily ever after."
(Beat)
You okay?

DIANE
Mmm hmm. That's wonderful about your job.

BAXTER
It's a job.

DIANE
Your dad must be thrilled.

BAXTER
Yes he is. Nepotism triumphs again! You look beautiful tonight.

DIANE
Thank you.

BAXTER

And might I say, you looked especially pulchritudinous standing next to Tracy, with flowers in your hands...

DIANE

Pulchritudinous? Okay... where are you going with this, Bax?

BAXTER

Nowhere, everywhere, anywhere...

DIANE

What's up with you?

BAXTER

Nothing. Oh, oops.

He drops to the ground, his back to her, and pats the ground.

Excuse me.

DIANE

What--

BAXTER

I-- dropped something--

DIANE

What is it?

BAXTER

Uh, it's a-- a--

(getting on one knee and holds up a ring)

It's this. How about it Diane? Let's live happily ever after, too.

DIANE

Oh. Oh, Baxter...

BAXTER

What--

DIANE

Don't do this, not now--

BAXTER

Why? Why not now?

DIANE

It's not-- I'm not--

BAXTER

What.

DIANE

Please, stand up. We need to talk.

BAXTER

Shit, that does not sound good.

DIANE

Come sit.

She leads him over to the bench. They sit.

BAXTER

I feel like an idiot.

DIANE

No! No, Bax, you're not an idiot. It's just... it's the timing.

BAXTER

Really. Okay, how about now?

DIANE

Stop.

BAXTER

What am I supposed to do here? Is there some sort of mating dance that you'll do so I'll know when the time is just right? The animal kingdom has it SO GOOD. Why can't you erupt into purple plumage, or start smelling like burgers or something? And what's wrong with the timing, anyway? I'm in a tuxedo for chrissakes. Our favorite song is playing. What! What could be better?

DIANE

Baxter. I... I'm moving.

BAXTER

You're what? I don't--

DIANE

I spoke to UCLA yesterday, the head of the department. She was amazing -- and she upped their offer. I didn't even ask for it. And it's so much higher than any of the other masters programs I applied to, you know? It means I don't have to keep working and saving, and...I can start now. How could I not take that? So... so I'm leaving for LA.

(pause)

In three weeks.

BAXTER

Unbelievable. Un-fucking-believable. Thanks. Thanks for letting me know.

DIANE

I didn't want to tell you until after their wedding--

BAXTER

How far after? Just before you left for the airport?

DIANE

This hasn't been easy for me either.

BAXTER

Oh, I know. SO painful for you.

DIANE

I'm sorry, Baxter.

BAXTER

No, I'm sorry. I'm really really sorry that I didn't see this coming a long time ago. I'm sorry that I kept thinking we actually had a future together.

DIANE

Of course we still have a future together.

BAXTER

Oh, please. Spare me.

DIANE

It's only a two-year program.

BAXTER

Right. On top of five years of kidding myself.

DIANE

Stop.

BAXTER

Let's just both stop, Di. There's not much to say here. It's simple. You've got priorities. Right? We've always known it. And I'm just not high enough on the list. You didn't even talk to me about any of this! You just did it!

DIANE

That's not-- I-- That's so unfair!

BAXTER

Bullshit. It's true, which is why you're squirming.

DIANE

I'm not squirming.

BAXTER

Yes you are. So go! Achieve! Take the best offer available! Leave me behind and don't look back!

DIANE

I can't believe you're doing this! When I accepted the offer I didn't think--

BAXTER

Oh, yes you did. You specialize in thinking! Lots and lots of mental gymnastics. It's the feeling part you suck at. So go. Just go.

DIANE

That's it? We're done?

BAXTER

Yeah.

He throws the ring as far as he can. It makes a "plop" noise of hitting water.

We're done.

DIANE

Oh my god, that was-- it must've cost--

BAXTER

Who the fuck cares.

DIANE

Bax.

BAXTER

What.

DIANE

Don't do this. Please don't just end it like this. I get that you're mad, but this isn't what I want. I don't even think it's what you want. Is it, really?

BAXTER

It is. Really. It's time for me to get real.

DIANE

Real?

BAXTER

Yeah. You don't really love me.

DIANE

What? That's not true. I *do* love you.

BAXTER

Not the way I love you.

DIANE

How do you know that? How could you possibly? I'm not the one saying it's over.

BAXTER

It's self-preservation, Diane.

DIANE

Oh my god, Baxter... just don't. Please? I don't want to lose you. With my dad gone, I... You're all I have, you know that.

BAXTER

You'll be fine. You're always fine.

DIANE

Am I.

(pause)

You're gonna regret this.

BAXTER

No, I'm not.

Long pause.

DIANE

Okay. Okay, then... how about we make a deal.

BAXTER

Like what.

DIANE

I don't know, like... some kind of agreement. I know it's cliché, and it's probably crazy, but... how about we just... maybe... agree to marry each other if we haven't found someone else by, I don't know, like... by twenty years from now?

BAXTER

You must be joking.

DIANE

No, I'm not.

BAXTER

Twenty years?

DIANE

What, is that too long?

BAXTER

Jesus, Diane, you'll be menopausal by then.

DIANE

Alright, fifteen?

BAXTER

Five.

DIANE

Five? That seems--

BAXTER

Five's plenty of time. Think of all the meaningless relationships you can have in five years.

DIANE

That's not what I want! Did you mean "you" as in me, or "you" as in one...?

BAXTER

It's "you" as in YOU ARE FUCKING IMPOSSIBLE!

DIANE

I know! I know. So.
(offers her hand to shake)
Deal?

BAXTER

You will never, ever find someone who loves you as much as I do, Diane. Never.

He ignores her hand, and leaves.

SCENE 5

India, a few years later. The sounds of baby frogs peeping. Yasodhara and Siddhartha are by the edge of a lake. There is a basket.

YASODHARA

Another perfect day.

SIDDHARTHA

The frogs agree with you.

YASODHARA

I love that sound. So hopeful.

They both listen. She unpacks a cloth from the basket. Faint Sounds of moaning and grieving intermingle with the peeping sounds -- he hears them, she does not.

I brought all of your favorites, except for mango. Those were overripe, so I brought extra tamarind, instead. Is that all right?

(pause)

Siddhartha?

He does not hear her. SPOT on Yasodhara as SOUNDS stop. Siddhartha freezes.

YASODHARA (CONT'D)

I couldn't hear then what he heard. Maybe because I grew up surrounded by the sounds of pain in the world. He did not. You know that, right? No? Okay, a quick primer.

(gets up to "lecture")

When Siddhartha was born, it was prophesied that he would leave the kingdom in order to become a buddha. Now Siddhartha's dad, a king, did NOT want this to happen to his baby prince. He wanted him to be king someday, not some poor holy man. So he created a perfect palace with equally-perfect grounds, and sequestered him inside. He figured that if his son never experienced the ugliness of the world, its pain or its misery, he'd never think of leaving.

(pause)

And that's where I come in. By the time Siddhartha was 16, he had somehow convinced his father to let him leave the palace and see the "real world" a few times. When Siddhartha saw how the other 99 percent lives -- and dies -- so to speak, he became restless. His father decided that what he needed to calm him down and keep him settled, was a wife. Me.

SPOT OUT. She whistles the bird song. Nothing. She whistles it again. He returns the call. He pulls her to him; they kiss.

SIDDHARTHA

You are everything I could ever want.

YASODHARA

As are you. Why are we so fortunate?

SIDDHARTHA

It must be our destiny.

YASODHARA

Yes...

SOUNDS return. She spreads out the cloth on the ground, sits. He gets lost again. Pause.

My love, would you eat?

SIDDHARTHA

Hmm?

YASODHARA

(offers fruit)

Tamarind?

SIDDHARTHA

Yes, it is.

YASODHARA

No, not-- Never mind.

SIDDHARTHA

What is it? What ails you?

YASODHARA

You are so lost-- I worry that perhaps...

SIDDHARTHA

What.

SPOT on Yasodhara, SOUNDS stop; Siddartha freezes.

YASODHARA

I worry that he is going to leave me, to fulfill the prophecies. I know why his father wanted him to get married; we all knew. But I can't say it out loud. I keep it inside. Maybe that way it won't be real. It won't happen. So I say, instead:

SPOT out.

YASODHARA (CONT'D)

Perhaps you are thinking of another.

SIDDHARTHA

Another! Sweet one, hear me now. You are the only one for me. Yashodhara, come here, please.

(leads her to the water's edge)

Which is the best lotus?

YASODHARA

They are all alike, are they not? All beautiful and perfect.

SIDDHARTHA

(touching her cheek)

No. Your face is the most beautiful and perfect lotus.

YASODHARA

If I am a lotus, then you are my sun. I can only bloom in your love. If it ceases to shine...

SIDDHARTHA

Never.

MITA (O.S.)

Yasodhara!

YASODHARA

She's here!

(to Mita, waving)

Mita! By the water!

(hugs Siddhartha)
Ooh, thank you for inviting her.

SIDDHARTHA
Of course.

Mita enters. As they rush to hug each other:

YASODHARA
Oh, Mita--

MITA
Hello my friend--

SIDDHARTHA
Welcome, Mita.

MITA
Let me look at you both.
(stands back, appraises them)
Mm hm! Just as I expected. Quite sick.

YASODHARA
Sick!

MITA
Feverishly in love. When I return to Koli Raj, I shall tell your father that you two have infected all of Kapilavastu... with joy!

SIDDHARTHA
Indeed. Well. No doubt you two have much to say. Until dinner, then--

YASODHARA
Wait--
(embraces him)
I love you.

SIDDHARTHA
And I you.
(picks up the basket)
Enjoy your friend.

Siddhartha exits.

YASODHARA
Mita, tell me about Koli Raj, my parents... is everyone well?

MITA
Yes, and so happy for you. Except for your brother.

YASODHARA
Oh, him. Deva Datta never liked Siddhartha.

MITA

Well, now he's claiming that your marriage to Siddhartha "will bring her much suffering." Such drama. If he could see you now...

YASODHARA

I'm so glad you're here.

MITA

So am I! Won't we have fun? You must show me all three of your palaces! We can--

YASODHARA

Mita, no. I-- I need to talk to you.

MITA

Are you all right, little goat?

YASODHARA

Yes. No. I don't know.

MITA

Come. Let's sit.

(they sit)

Now. Tell me what is troubling you.

YASODHARA

I'm... I'm so afraid.

MITA

You? The Yasodhara I know has never been afraid of anything.

YASODHARA

I'm not the same Yasodhara. Something's changed. The moment I opened my heart to Siddhartha I became... weak, almost. I never thought I needed anyone... now, when I think of life without him, I'm paralyzed.

MITA

So don't think about life without him.

YASODHARA

Mita--

MITA

Think about flowers, and gardens -- you love those--

YASODHARA

It's not so simple as that. He's-- he's not happy with me.

MITA

What? You are crazy! I've seen the man, he is completely, totally in love with you!

YASODHARA

No-- I know he loves me. But he's not... *happy*. In the past few months, something's changed. He meditates for hours, he's distracted... And at night, he's restless. He shouts out these words in his sleep--

MITA

Like what.

YASODHARA

Like, "my world, my world... I must save you from suffering..."

MITA

Well, at least he's not shouting out someone else's name--

YASODHARA

Mita!

MITA

I know.

(pause)

It's the prophecy, isn't it.

(Yasodhara nods)

Do you ever speak about it?

YASODHARA

I cannot. If I allowed that thought to take hold in our life together, it might... become real.

MITA

And then?

YASODHARA

I would disappear.

(pause)

Mita! What has happened to me?

MITA

You fell in love.

YASODHARA

But shouldn't love make me strong?

MITA

Not if that love is your only purpose. You have lost yourself in this love, my friend. You must remember who and what you are, apart from Siddhartha.

YASODHARA

I think...you are right.

MITA
 Finally! After all these years!
 (pause)
 Now. Let's go do something.

YASODHARA
 Like what.

MITA
 I know.
 (stands)
 Let's ride.

YASODHARA
 I can't,--

MITA
 Yes you can.
 (runs offstage, saying:)
 Race you to the stables.

YASODHARA
 You don't know where they are.

MITA (O.S.)
 True! Well, then you'll probably win, won't you.

YASODHARA
 You are impossible...

MITA (O.S.)
 No, I'm waiting, that's what I am. Come on little goat!
 Show me the way.

Yasodhara takes off.

SCENE 6

Los Angeles, a year later. Diane's graduate apartment. Diane picks up the picnic cloth, covers herself with it, reads a book. There is a knock.

DIANE
 Coming!

She opens the door to reveal Tracy, clearly pregnant. They both shout.

DIANE (CONT'D)
 (hugging her)
 Oh my god!

TRACY
 Yay, Diane!

DIANE
 My god oh my god oh my god! Look at you! You're so--

TRACY
 Huge, I'm fucking huge!

DIANE
 No you're not that big--

TRACY
 Yes I am, I'm like a tick.

DIANE
 God, I can't believe it.

TRACY
 Neither can I.

DIANE
 Come in! How was the flight?
 (taking her bag)
 Here--

TRACY
 Just swell. My water didn't break at 30,000 feet, so that's
 a plus.

DIANE
 Speaking of, you want anything?

TRACY
 What I want, I can't have. Water's fine--

DIANE
 K.
 (as she leaves)
 Sit. Or not--

TRACY
 Stand, yeah, I gotta move around a little.
 (wanders around)
 Uh... Diane?

DIANE (O.S.)
 Yeah?

TRACY
 There's nothing on your walls.

DIANE (O.S.)
 You know me.

TRACY

You've been here over a year!

DIANE

I've been busy!

(enters with water)

I spend every waking minute in the library.

TRACY

Di. Do I need to walk you through the amount of time it takes--

DIANE

(handing her the water)

No. You don't. So Robert gets in tomorrow?

TRACY

Yeah. He couldn't take off work. It's fine-- he'll go straight from the airport to the rehearsal dinner.

(beat)

Are you...?

DIANE

I know what you're thinking--

TRACY

It's logical--

DIANE

It is. But no, I'm really okay with it. Really. REALLY.

TRACY

Jury's out.

DIANE

I am! Baxter called to tell me, and I was surprisingly okay.

Pause.

TRACY

If it's any consolation, she's a pig.

DIANE

Oh stop--

TRACY

She is! She's this blond, permanently tan, anorexic L.A. trust-fund tri-delt with big boobs and no brain.

DIANE

Is that supposed to cheer me up?

No-- TRACY

Which I don't need-- DIANE

Roger-- TRACY

And isn't she a lawyer, too? She can't have NO brain. DIANE

Trust me. With her boobs and her daddy's cashola, she has no need for higher stem functioning. TRACY

God it's good to see you. DIANE
(laughs)

You, too. TRACY

Baxter seemed happy. DIANE

Yeah, right. TRACY

What. DIANE

He was faking it. TRACY

Trace-- DIANE

He was! He just hoped he could make you jealous by getting engaged. But it didn't, and it totally backfired, cause now he's gotta marry this pig. TRACY

Will you stop it! DIANE

Hey! I'm just the truth sayer! TRACY

You're the muckraker. DIANE

TRACY

He's... he's the pack mule. Everything she used to do, he's doing. Plus his job. Plus take care of her. I keep telling him to hire someone, but he won't listen. He just puts his head down and decides to re-grout the bathroom.

DIANE

My dad went into overdrive too, after Mom left us.

TRACY

It's their way of coping.

(pause)

It must suck to be the one left behind.

Beat.

DIANE

I'm so sorry, Trace. I wish there were something I could do.

TRACY

Well, now that you mention it... I was gonna wait, but--

DIANE

What.

Tracy picks up the cloth and begins to fold it.

TRACY

I know you have no intention of doing this, Di, but I can ask, right?

DIANE

You always do.

TRACY

So... Robert and I live in this gaggingly cute neighborhood, and there's this little house just up the street from us that's for sale,--

DIANE

Okay...

TRACY

--and Rutgers has a terrific Women's Studies department,--

DIANE

Uh huh...

TRACY

--and you could be the fun, feminist, spinster pseudo-aunt, and moving would be easy, because you don't have to take anything down off your walls.

DIANE
Are you done fantasizing?

TRACY
You said I could ask.

DIANE
My mistake.

TRACY
So I'm asking -- please, just consider applying there.

DIANE
I don't even know if they have a PhD in--

TRACY
I do. They do.

DIANE
You kill me.

TRACY
Will you just consider it?

DIANE
I couldn't afford a house!

TRACY
Fine! An apartment with blank walls it is! Just consider it.

DIANE
Alright. I'll consider it.

TRACY
Woo hoo!! Yes! Mission accomplished.

Tracy hands her the folded cloth.

DIANE
You know there's almost no chance--

TRACY
Almost is better than none. Okay. So what's in your fridge?
(pause)
Anything?

(Diane shakes her head no)
Classic. Come on. You're buying.

They exit.

SCENE 7

New Jersey, two years later. A hallway outside a formal gathering of PhD candidates. JUSTIN is standing at a mirror, trying to pin on a boutonniere. Diane emerges from the ladies room, bumps into him, and his flower falls to the ground.

DIANE

Oh! Woops--

JUSTIN

That's okay-- I can--

They both stoop to get it; she grabs it first.

DIANE

My fault-- here--

JUSTIN

Thanks--

DIANE

Sorry, I wasn't looking--

JUSTIN

No worries. Thanks.

She prepares to go, but sees him fumble with the flower and his lapel.

DIANE

Do you need...

JUSTIN

I know, I'm an idiot with this thing. I don't know how it's supposed to...

DIANE

Can I help you?

JUSTIN

Um... That'd be...yeah, thanks.

She gets in close, begins to pin it on his lapel.

DIANE

These are tricky; you have to go through the fabric, then the stem, see?

She looks up at him, falters for a moment.

JUSTIN

Oh...

DIANE
Um... and then the fabric again...

JUSTIN
Okay...

She is very close.

DIANE
Like that...

JUSTIN
Nice... nice job.

DIANE
There.
(backing away)
I used to... know someone who always... needed help.

JUSTIN
Lucky him.
(beat; extends a hand)
I'm Justin Gallagher.

DIANE
Diane. Brewster. Nice to meet you.

JUSTIN
Likewise.

Beat while they are lost in each other's eyes, still holding hands. Another beat.

Do I know you?

DIANE
I don't think so...

JUSTIN
You seem so--

DIANE
So do you--

JUSTIN
Huh.

DIANE
Maybe I've seen you on campus.

JUSTIN
I live waaay off.

Sociology Department? DIANE

Med school. Formerly. JUSTIN

Library? DIANE
 (he shakes his head no)
 Okay, well, three strikes and--

I'm not out. Are you? JUSTIN

I-- no, no. I-- no. Wait-- you said Gallagher? DIANE

Yeah. JUSTIN

You're speaking at this thing, aren't you. DIANE

Yep. JUSTIN

Now I know why I know you. The article in the Alumni magazine! DIANE

Yeah. JUSTIN

Oh my god, I am completely in awe of your work in India. DIANE

Well,-- JUSTIN

No, it's phenomenal. You're not just theorizing about making people's lives better, you're actually DOING it. DIANE

Thanks. JUSTIN

How do you do it? DIANE

Do you mean... JUSTIN

DIANE

I mean-- the needs must be virtually endless. What keeps you going?

JUSTIN

Um--

DIANE

--or should I wait for the speech.

JUSTIN

Naw. What keeps me going, huh? I never really thought about it. Even when there are challenges, it still always feels like it's what I was meant to do, you know? It's just... who I am, I guess, as lame as that sounds.

DIANE

Not lame at all.

JUSTIN

Who are you?

DIANE

Um, I am... god, that's harder than I thought. Well, my friend describes me as the fun, feminist, spinster pseudo-aunt.

JUSTIN

Spinster?

DIANE

Her word. "Spinster in training," maybe.

JUSTIN

(laughing)

I hope not.

DIANE

Me, too.

JUSTIN

Feminist?

DIANE

Women's Studies. Well, more specifically, examining gender bias within mythical systems across socio-economic and multi-cultural contexts.

JUSTIN

Fun?

DIANE

Oh god yes. I love it.

JUSTIN
No, I meant... your friend said--

DIANE
Oh! Oh!!
(They laugh.)
What, you don't think gender bias is fun?

JUSTIN
I don't think I should answer that.

DIANE
Smart. (pause) So... don't you need to prepare your notes,
or something?

JUSTIN
I'd rather talk to you.

DIANE
I'd hate to be the reason you flubbed your speech.

JUSTIN
It's just a speech. And actually,
(indicating his lapel)
you made me presentable.

DIANE
It's just a flower.

JUSTIN
But you're right. I should go. Could we meet up later,
Diane?

DIANE
Where?

JUSTIN
How 'bout here.

DIANE
I'll be here.

*He smiles, exits. She celebrates. LIGHTS CHANGE; six
weeks have passed.*

Diane on the phone, looking at a ring on her finger.

DIANE (CONT'D)
(excited)
Can you even believe it? I don't know. I don't know that
either.
(pause)
What's *that* supposed to mean?
(pause)

Why can't I know in six weeks? How? I don't know, I just know. Excuse me, but do you remember how you kept telling me, "oh, you'll know when it's the right one" and I kept saying "I *think* I know, is that the same as knowing? How will I know that I really know?" Well, now I know.

(pause)

It is not. I am not! Good, well, I'm done here--

(is about to hang up)

What. Fine.

(listens for a while; sighs.)

She is softening)

I know, Tracy. Can I-- Can I say something here? Yes, he's gone a lot but it's because he is so committed to his work. God! I've never met anyone like him. Passionate, devoted to making a difference... So it's actually perfect -- you know how independent I am. And Trace -- I just know he would be there for me if I needed him -- we have this deep connection, we had it the moment we met. I don't even know how to describe it. Meeting him was like... like reading a book that feels like it was written just for you.

(pause)

Thanks. So... will you be my matron of honor?

(laughs)

I promise, no barfing.

Lights down.

SCENE 8

Lights up on the liminal space, a few years later. Diane and Yasodhara face each other. Each one moves her hands over her belly, mirroring the other, then they slowly face out to the audience. Diane looks depressed, angry; Yasodhara looks joyful. Diane reaches one hand up to cover her mouth, nauseated. She gags, exits. Yasodhara stays.

Siddhartha enters.

YASODHARA

Darling!

(she embraces him)

Is something wrong?

SIDDHARTHA

No, I-- let us talk, my love.

YASODHARA

Gladly! I have some wonderful news.

SIDDHARTHA

Do you.

(pause)

Yasodhara, there is something... unspoken between us. It has always been there, a shadow from my past--

YASODHARA

No! Please, do not breathe life into that shadow.

SIDDHARTHA

I have to.

YASODHARA

Not now. Not when we... we finally...

(pause)

Siddhartha, you are to be a father!

SIDDHARTHA

Are... are you sure?

She nods, beaming. Pause, while he comprehends.

SIDDHARTHA (CONT'D)

(filled with mixed emotions)

You... Oh, Yasodhara.

YASODHARA

Are you not happy? It is what we have wanted for so long. Years! Together, we have created new life from our pure love. Finally, our prayers have been answered!

SIDDHARTHA

Of course, yes, I'm-- I'm filled with joy. To be a father, is-- I can hardly believe it...

She hugs him.

YASODHARA

A family. Oh! Mahadeva, what a blessing! We must tell your father, he will be over the moon.

SIDDHARTHA

Yes. Yes! I'll go now, and tell him.

YASODHARA

Oh, let's.

SIDDHARTHA

No, you-- I'll do it. Would you mind, my love? If I speak to him first, alone?

YASODHARA

No, of course not. I... I'll send a message to my parents.

SIDDHARTHA

Yes, perfect.

Starts to leave, turns back and embraces her, then exits. SPOT on Yasodhara.

YASODHARA

(to audience)

He didn't tell his father. Not right away. He disappeared into the woods to meditate.

I knew. I knew he was struggling with what to do. I knew our prayers were not the same, but I... I wanted to believe. I told myself that as soon as he saw our child, his heart would change.

(shakes her head)

It did.

She exits as:

SCENE 9

Diane enters, visibly pregnant. She lectures to an unseen undergraduate classroom.

DIANE

So... by now I think we can all agree that gender hierarchies and inequalities are generated within belief systems, yes? That what we believe drives how we view genders?

(scans her audience)

Okay, good. And we can also agree that in contemporary society, here in the West, those hierarchies are perpetuated through representation of every type -- popular culture, media, books, television, religion, etc. Yes? Are we all in agreement with that statement as well?

(scans again)

Great. So now, let's turn our attention to non-contemporary society, to societies of antiquity, and in particular, to the creation myths from those societies, their "how the world began" stories. Why? Because they give us a clue as to why gender inequality persists. Let's imagine, for a moment, what it would be like to grow up in a society that believed that the world, and everything in it, was created by a female deity. If you were born on the island of Crete during the Bronze Age, or in ancient Egypt, or as an Australian aboriginal, or as a Venezuelan Yaruro, you would have been taught that as *truth*.

So how would that one belief, that one myth, influence your life? Was anyone here raised that way? No? I wasn't, either. I was raised to believe that God, who is male, created the heavens and the Earth. That he created Adam in his image, and created Eve out of Adam's rib. And that because Eve was disobedient, she deserved the punishment of subservience to Adam and the pain of childbirth. Wow.

That's quite a different belief system to grow up in, isn't it?

My point in all this is... Does anyone know the David Foster Wallace parable about the fish?

(scans her audience)

A few... Well, there are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes "What the hell is water?"

(pause)

Gender inequality is the water in which we swim. It's the amniotic fluid that surrounds us as we gestate, the air we breathe when our lungs take that first breath.

So. How do we change that water and that air? The answer, as I see it, is simple, but not easy: change the myth.

Lights lower; SOUNDS of a baby crying.

SCENE 10

The liminal space. Yasodhara enters and creates the suggestion of a bed. Diane disassembles her belly, pulls cloths out of it, gives half of them to Yasodhara. They fashion them into baby bundles, and sit on the bed, each leaning against the back of the other. They hold their "babies" as Justin/Siddhartha enters, dressed in a simple outfit that could be hospital scrubs or Indian garb. LIGHTS rise on:

DIANE & YASODHARA

(overlapping)

Shh... shh... shh...

YASODHARA (CONT'D)

Welcome, little one.

DIANE

Hello, sweet surprise.

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

How are you feeling?

DIANE & YASODHARA

Good--

YASODHARA (CONT'D)

All the pain is a grateful memory.

DIANE
 Drugs are great. I didn't feel a thing.

YASODHARA
 He favors you.

DIANE
 She's got your chin.

DIANE & YASODHARA (CONT'D)
 And my father's eyes. Look--

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA
 Beautiful. Like you.

The women hold the babies out to Justin/Siddhartha.

DIANE & YASODHARA
 Here--

Justin/Siddhartha takes Diane's baby. Yasodhara, hurt, holds on to hers.

YASODHARA (CONT'D)
 He needs a name--

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA
 I have a name--

DIANE
 Really?

He leans over and whispers into Diane and Yasodhara's ears simultaneously.

YASODHARA
 Rahula?

DIANE
 Rebecca? That's sweet... but why?

YASODHARA
 But Rahula means...

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA
 It means "that which binds."

YASODHARA
 ...Fetter. Hindrance.

DIANE
 She will bind us together. Rebecca. That's beautiful.

YASODHARA

Rahula. As you wish, my lord.

Justin/Siddhartha kisses the baby, hands it back to Diane.

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

I'll be right back--

He exits.

DIANE & YASODHARA

That's fine.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Hello, Rebecca.

YASODHARA

(wistful)

Welcome, Rahula.

Lights change. Diane exits; SPOT on Yasodhara. She speaks to the audience:

YASODHARA (CONT'D)

This is where it gets tricky. In just about every story of the life of the Buddha, it says that a few weeks later, Siddhartha slipped away in the middle of the night. It's true, he did. And here's what that version looks like:

She lies down with the "baby" next to her. Sleeps. Siddhartha enters quietly. He stands, watching them for a while.

SIDDHARTHA

My beloved Yasodhara, beautiful Rahula...

Faint SOUNDS.

Yes! I hear you! I am coming!

SOUNDS stop. He walks to her bed, kneels.

My poor innocent Yasodhara, I am leaving you tonight. Will you grow to detest my very name? I pray not. I love you, and yet I also love my people... I hear their cries... I must find the answer to this dukkha.

(pause)

My poor wife, I foresee your suffering, too. You want no one but me. But I must go -- if I do not, tonight, then I will never go.

He places his forehead to the soles of her feet.

Forgive, forgive me, sweet wife. When the morning comes, for the first time there will be no Siddhartha to kiss open your eyes. Love has been sweet in our lives and it shall never cease.

(stands)

Farewell, sweet ones... Know that wherever I may be, you are the ones I have loved.

He walks to the door, turns back, lingers.
(to himself:)

Go! Just go!

He exits. Lights change; it is dawn. The baby makes sounds. Yasodhara wakes up, looks around.

YASODHARA

My lord? Oh, please, no-- My lord! Siddhartha!
(She gets up. Shouting:)

Siddhartha? Please! Answer me!

Mita enters.

Mita! Is he...

Yashodhara sees the expression on Mita's face, backs away, sinks to the floor.

SPOT on Yasodhara as Mita gets "the baby." As Yasodhara speaks to the audience, Mita hands it to her, exits.

YASODHARA (CONT'D)

(to audience)

The nightmares, the shock, the sadness... all real. But there is more to it that the story doesn't tell. Some time before that night, we talked, Siddhartha and I. It was a lot like the following:

Diane enters the SPOT, receives "the baby" from Yasodhara. Diane joins Justin on a couch, hands baby to him as SPOT follows Yasodhara's exit.

SCENE 11

New Jersey, suggestion of Diane and Justin's small apartment. Diane and Justin are seated close to each other, with the baby in Justin's arms, facing them. They fixate on her and smile like crazy.

JUSTIN

Oh-- Oh, there...

There it is--

DIANE

It's coming...

JUSTIN

DIANE & JUSTIN (CONT'D)
(overlapping)
There! Oh my god! Oooh! Hello!

Oh GOD what a beautiful smile.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

The best.

DIANE

They look at each other in awe and delight.

How did we do this? How did we create such beauty together?

DIANE (CONT'D)

You fixed my boutonniere.

JUSTIN

I like your kinky euphemism.

DIANE

They laugh.

Ow. Ow...

JUSTIN

Oh, sorry. Still achy?

DIANE

Yeah. Talk about fixing my boutonniere...

JUSTIN

(adjusting his crotch)

They both laugh again.

Ow oh oww...

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

No more jokes! But look! She's smiling again...

DIANE

She doesn't seem to realize she's gonna be an only child.

JUSTIN

DIANE
(to baby)
It's not that bad, sweetie. You get *all* of our attention.
Except when your daddy's in India.

JUSTIN

You know I don't want to go.

DIANE

So don't.

JUSTIN

Oh god, Diane--

DIANE

I know. I know you have to. I'm just... freaking out a little. Why did the hospital let us take her home? I have no clue how to do this. You have to jump through more hoops to bring home a cat from the ASPCA.

JUSTIN

Yes!

DIANE

I never babysat, I didn't have siblings -- I was too busy reading and doing extra-credit assignments.

JUSTIN

There are books on how to do this, aren't there?

DIANE

Very funny.

JUSTIN

And Tracy's close...

DIANE

Thank god.

JUSTIN

I'm sorry, Di.

DIANE

No, honey, don't apologize. It's okay. I can deal. I've never failed at anything, remember?

JUSTIN

True.

DIANE

You're doing such good work. Real work, work that affects so many people.

(in a Humphrey Bogart accent)

"and it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world."

JUSTIN

Um...yeah.

DIANE
No? Have you never seen *Casablanca*??

JUSTIN
Oh. Maybe.

DIANE
Maybe? It's a miracle we ended up together.

JUSTIN
Thank god we did.

DIANE
I'm gonna miss you so much.

JUSTIN
Me too. Both of you.

DIANE
How about we don't talk about it, okay? It'll ruin things.
Let's just be together, now, like it's going to last forever.

He nods. She puts her head on his shoulder, they gaze at Rebecca. Lights change.

SCENE 12

India, a few weeks later. Bedroom. Yasodhara is dressed in a saffron hermit's robe, standing at the mirror, expressionless. Mita enters.

MITA
You sent for me.

Yasodhara nods, hands her a razor.

YASODHARA
(twisting her long hair in front of her)
I no longer have need of this.

MITA
No, sweet friend--

YASODHARA
Yes.

MITA
I cannot--

YASODHARA
You want to serve me.

MITA

Yes, but--

YASODHARA

Then help me now. Remove this... this reminder.

MITA

As you wish.

(holds the razor to cut, but stops. Cries.)

I cannot.

YASODHARA

(hard)

It's alright, Mita.

MITA

No, it's not. It is so... so sad. To see you like this.

(pause)

Your father is so worried. He has heard that you have forsaken music, comfort, your gardens... that you take only one meal a day--

YASODHARA

How can he expect me to act differently? When my beloved may be starving and sleeping at night under a tree?

MITA

Your father loves you--

YASODHARA

I love my husband.

MITA

I know.

YASODHARA

And my only consolation now is to be like him. If he is to be a sannyasi, I must be a sannyasini.

(pause; an outburst)

How could he leave me, Mita? He said he loved me!

MITA

He did love you--

YASODHARA

Then how? How? Why did he leave me for other sufferers? Am I not suffering cruelly?

MITA

Of course--

YASODHARA

Did he love them more? I can tell you this: not one of those sufferers want him so much as I do!

MITA

I know--

YASODHARA

He knew, Mita. He knew there was nothing in this world I feared more than life without him. How could he do this to me?

MITA

Did you not know as well, Princess? Did you not marry him, knowing that someday, he would leave you?

Beat.

YASODHARA

Perhaps you should go, too.

MITA

Princess!

YASODHARA

Everything has changed. This palace is no longer a place of laughter and joy... it is a shmashan. You are still young, Mita. Seek some other place, where you will have merriment and pleasure, perhaps a family of your own. The days of happiness are gone from Bishram-bhavan forever.

MITA

Not forever -- you don't know--

YASODHARA

I do know. In my heart, I know. The sun has departed. This lotus will fade away.

MITA

Yasodhara, I have always been honored by your love. Proud that you called me your friend. When you were happy I shared your joy. And now, I will share your sorrow. Please... Do not bid me leave.

(beat)

YASODHARA

You are so good. I'm sorry, Mita. I am...

MITA

You are brave.

YASODHARA

Ha!

MITA

You are. You are strong and brave and you will endure this.

YASODHARA

I can't--

MITA

You must.

YASODHARA

No--

MITA

Yes. Do you forget who needs you? Rahula has lost his father. You are his world now.

(pause)

Princess. Listen. Your suffering is a gift from the Prince who loved you. He alone has given you this sorrow to bear. I don't know why. You don't know why. But a wise woman once said to me: "Just because you do not know the plan, does not mean there is none."

Yasodhara nods. She gestures for the razor. Mita hands it to her.

YASODHARA

Thank you. I can finish this.

Mita bows, exits. Yasodhara stands, razor in hand, contemplating. Lights down as she begins to shave her head.

SCENE 13

New Jersey, three months later. In darkness, sounds of baby laughter. Lights up on Diane at the sink, drying dishes. Diane's cheeks are very red. Justin and Rebecca are offstage.

JUSTIN (O.S.)

Winky winky winky!! Where's her little pinky?

Rebecca laughs.

Welly welly welly, where's her little belly? Oh, there it is! B-b-b-b-b-b- [a "raspberry"]

She laughs.

Uh oh... it's time for Rebecca, the flying baby!! Vrrrooom! Vrrrooom!

DIANE

Justin--

JUSTIN (O.S.)

Vrooom!

Rebecca laughs hysterically.

Vroom, vroom!

DIANE

Justin!

JUSTIN (O.S.)
(laughing also)

Yeah--

DIANE

It's bedtime--

JUSTIN (O.S.)

I know--

(to Rebecca)

Vroom! Command control has ordered the flying baby to land, so the flying baby circles, searching for an airstrip... vrooom--

DIANE

Justin!

JUSTIN (O.S.)

I know--

(to Rebecca)

All she can see below are mountains -- where will she land?

DIANE

Justin--

JUSTIN (O.S.)

All right, Diane!

(to Rebecca)

The flying baby must make an emergency landing -- up ahead! Can she do it? It looks flat and soft, almost like a... a... crib! Vroooooooooommmmm, down she goes, vrooommm...

He makes landing noises; Rebecca laughs more. Diane dries her hands, stands at the doorway of Rebecca's room.

JUSTIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Ahhh...safe and sound. Roger, command control: the flying baby has landed.

DIANE

It's past seven.

JUSTIN (O.S.)

I get it.

DIANE

No, I don't think you do. Here.

(extends cloth/dishtowel)

Could you finish up? I need to calm her down now so she can sleep.

Justin appears in the doorway.

JUSTIN

She's fine.

DIANE

She's all riled up.

JUSTIN

She's happy.

DIANE

Just take this, will you?

*He takes the cloth, Diane goes into the bedroom.
Justin's phone rings. He answers.*

JUSTIN

Hey Jacques, what's up... Oh, no... Shit! How much of the materials are gone? Does Saba know when-- Yeah. So can we start anyway? Yeah, get the foundation going while we-- Oh. Yeah, no, I get it. Look, can Saba start asking around? Maybe recover some of it-- buy it back. I know, it fries me too, but let's keep focused on the endgoal, right? We want it up before the rains.

Diane enters.

Yeah. Umm...

(looks at Diane)

Not sure yet. Yeah. I'll keep you posted. Thanks for letting me know. I'll get a hold of Bill. Call anytime. Okay. Thanks, Jacques. You're doing a great job. Okay. You too. Bye.

DIANE

Not sure about what?

JUSTIN

What?

DIANE

You told Jacques that you're not sure yet about something.

JUSTIN

Oh. Just... itinerary stuff.

DIANE
Well, he knows that you're going to be here for at least
three months this time, right?

JUSTIN
Mm hm.
(pause)
Dinner was really good.

DIANE
Good.

JUSTIN
Thanks for making it.

DIANE
You're welcome.

JUSTIN
It's amazing, how you've picked it up.

DIANE
Didn't have much of a choice.

Beat.

JUSTIN
So what did the dermatologist say.

DIANE
Rosacea. Probably.

JUSTIN
Really. Have you ever had that before?

DIANE
No.

JUSTIN
What's wrong.

DIANE
Nothing.

JUSTIN
Come on.

DIANE
I'm fine.

JUSTIN
Are you happy that I'm home?

DIANE

What kind of-- that's ridiculous. Why would you ask that.

JUSTIN

I don't know, it's just a feeling.

DIANE

My god, Justin, it's all I've wanted for the past six months. Which was supposed to be four.

JUSTIN

Right. I know, I'm sorry. But I'm finally here and it doesn't seem like you're all that happy.

DIANE

It's-- of course-- it's-- great, you know?

JUSTIN

Is it?

DIANE

Justin. Why are you grilling me?

JUSTIN

I'm not grilling. I just really want to know how you feel.

DIANE

Fine. You want to know? I'll tell you. It's... it's incredibly frustrating.

JUSTIN

Okay--

DIANE

That's what it is.

JUSTIN

Why.

DIANE

It just IS. You know? I don't know why.

JUSTIN

Yes you do.

DIANE

Alright, yes, I do, but I don't know how to articulate it.

JUSTIN

YOU? Don't know how to articulate something?

DIANE

My god you're pissing me off.

JUSTIN

Good. Now we're getting somewhere. You've been like a stone since I got home. I'd rather have you angry than... dead.

DIANE

Oh, good. I'm glad it makes you happy to see me pissed off.

JUSTIN

You know what I mean.

DIANE

I'm done. I'm going to bed. I'm exhausted.

JUSTIN

So am I. But we need to talk.

DIANE

We can talk tomorrow.

JUSTIN

No, we need to now.

DIANE

Why.

JUSTIN

Because I don't want to wake up next to a stone again tomorrow morning.

DIANE

Too fucking bad.

She starts to leave. He blocks her path.

JUSTIN

Don't go.

DIANE

Move, Justin.

JUSTIN

Look at me.

DIANE

Move.

JUSTIN

I will. Just look at me. I love you.

DIANE

That's so unfair.

JUSTIN

Why--

DIANE

It's all so fucking unfair.

JUSTIN

What is.

DIANE

Everthing! All of this! You, coming and going whenever you please while I'm-- You come home and-- I finally have a system! It may not look like much, but it's what keeps me sane. And then you show up and-- You know, you don't get to come home after six months and just do it the way you want to!

JUSTIN

I get it--

DIANE

No, you don't! You couldn't possibly!

JUSTIN

Diane--

DIANE

You don't!

JUSTIN

Okay! And do you think it's easy to be gone that long? To be apart from you and Rebecca? Knowing how miserable you are and not being able to do anything about it?

DIANE

Able? You're not able?

JUSTIN

No--

DIANE

I don't see a gun to your head.

JUSTIN

You're right. It's a choice.

DIANE

It is.

JUSTIN

Just like choosing to marry someone who builds hospitals in India.

DIANE

Pregnancy was not my choice.

JUSTIN
Keeping the baby was.

DIANE
We both chose that.

JUSTIN
Yeah. We did. Are you sorry you did?
(beat)

DIANE
(softly)
Don't ever say that to me again, Justin.

JUSTIN
I'm sorry.

DIANE
You have no idea what it's like to be the one left behind.

JUSTIN
You're right.

Beat.
C'mere.

DIANE
I hate this.

JUSTIN
What.

DIANE
Needing someone--

JUSTIN
Someone?

DIANE
You. Alright? You. I... I'm not used to this. I didn't expect-- She needs me so much, Justin. It never stops. It's like some unspoken marriage vow that took effect the instant that cord was cut... Day, night, in sickness and in health -- mine or hers, it doesn't matter, I'm the one she depends on. No one else. Except you, but you're not here. And all my life I've been so proud to be so self-sufficient, Little Miss Independent -- who fucking cares? How hard is it to care only for yourself?

JUSTIN
That's pretty harsh.

DIANE

No it's not. It's the truth. And so she needs me and I need someone else. You. It's vicious.

JUSTIN

And I need you.

DIANE

It's not the same.

JUSTIN

I know. I'm not pretending it is. But I'll tell you -- I ache all the time now. Like an organ I never knew I had was surgically removed, and now I'm in chronic pain. I've never felt like this before. Ever since I started doing this work, I've known without a doubt that I was fulfilling my purpose in the world. It felt 100% right, you know?

DIANE

Yes--

JUSTIN

But now? Now when I hear Rebecca laugh, or look into your eyes, the pain disappears, but then my work, my purpose, is still somewhere else. (pause) So every day I feel like I'm doing the right thing, and the wrong thing, at the same time.

Beat.

DIANE

I love you so much. It sucks.

JUSTIN

It does!

DIANE

What are we going to do?

JUSTIN

I don't know.

(pause)

I could kiss you...

DIANE

Would that help?

JUSTIN

We could try it and see.

(kisses her gently)

Any better?

DIANE

Possibly. Jury's out.

He kisses her again, longer this time.

JUSTIN

I'm feeling a little better about things.

DIANE

Me, too.

*She wraps her arms around him, kisses him hard.
Lights down as they exit into the bedroom.*

SCENE 14

*SPOT on Diane. She looks at an EPT stick in her hand,
screams:*

DIANE (CONT'D)

NOOOOOOOO!

ACT 2

SCENE 1

Diane and Tracy are seated together on the couch, facing the audience. Lights suggest a tv screen. We hear the last full minute of the movie Casablanca. Diane is five months pregnant, her face has a red bumpy rash, and she is staring at the screen impassively. Tracy is weeping. The movie ends; Diane watches Tracy as she blows her nose into a dishtowel/cloth.

DIANE

Hey, thanks for cheering me up.

TRACY

What. You love this movie.

DIANE

It's so messed up.

TRACY

What is.

DIANE

I never saw it before.

TRACY

What!

DIANE

The ending! I always thought it was so romantic and noble--

TRACY

It is!

DIANE

No it's not, it only feels that way because we don't see what happens *after* she gets on that plane. Ilsa leaves Casablanca with Victor for "the cause," you know, but what does her life actually LOOK like with him? How does she go on?

TRACY

I don't think I want to hear this...

DIANE

It's all well and good to make the choice she made -- oh, and actually, Rick made it FOR her, which is a whole other messed up, gender-privileged concept -- but then how does she LIVE that choice? She's apart from the man she truly loves, alone most of the time because her husband's some kind of hero--

TRACY

Stop--

DIANE

--no doubt knocked up more than once because she's so gorgeous and her husband's vasectomy failed--

TRACY

Stop. Stop! Okay? You have just TOTALLY ruined my favorite movie for me.

DIANE

Sorry. I'm not much fun these days.

TRACY

You were never that much fun.

Diane stares at her.

Joke. It was a joke. Ugh.

Pause. Tracy offers chocolate.

Want some?

DIANE

I'm not supposed to.

TRACY

Says who?

DIANE

Says every dermatologist. Chocolate is a trigger or something. It's all such bullshit.

TRACY

It doesn't look that bad.

DIANE

Oh yes it does. It just gets worse and worse. I've tried everything. Nothing helps.

TRACY

What causes it?

DIANE

No one knows.

TRACY
It's really not that bad.

DIANE
Right.

TRACY
Kind of a just-slapped look.

DIANE
Okay! I'm going to bed.

TRACY
It's Saturday night.

DIANE
Oh, please, like I care? Saturday, Tuesday, what's the difference?

TRACY
Diane--

DIANE
What. It's all the same. I do the same fucking thing every moment of my waking fucking life, every fucking day. Except that now that I'm pregnant, every day I'm more fucking tired while I do it.

(She scoffs.)

TRACY
What.

DIANE
It's just such a bill of goods. We were all sold it and we all bought it. "Oh, you can be anything you want! The sky's the limit, ladies!" What a crock of shit.

TRACY
Di--

DIANE
It is! You can't "have it all."

TRACY
Tell that to someone who doesn't have a PhD.

DIANE
Uhh, that would be ME, Trace.

TRACY
Oh, you're so close...

DIANE

But no cigar! Just today, in fact, I called Horowitz at home and withdrew from the program.

Beat. Diane starts eating chocolate.

TRACY

What?! You-- what the fuck?

DIANE

I'm done. No more-- no more trying to get cheap sitters and asking for extensions--

TRACY

I can't believe this. Diane, there's got to be a way.

DIANE

Nope! Not for me. Don't have parents or siblings to babysit or a trust fund or a husband that's around... in fact, I've got a husband who keeps us pretty much right near the poverty level -- turns out saving the world doesn't pay.

TRACY

I can help with Rebecca more.

DIANE

You already do. And besides... who am I kidding? How could I possibly teach a feminist curriculum when I'm at home doing the dishes?

TRACY

Those two things are not mutually exclusive.

DIANE

To me they are.

(pause; sarcastic)

Hey, it's fine. Really. I think my mistake was going to college in the first place. Making scrambled eggs, changing diapers, folding laundry... I shouldn't have bothered with high school.

TRACY

It's the hormones, Di. When you're pregnant, everything goes haywire.

DIANE

No, I think actually this is the time I'm supposed to be euphoric. The haywire part comes AFTER the baby.

TRACY

Oh, right.

DIANE

So it's all fine.

TRACY
(taking away the chocolate)
You're not fine.

DIANE
I'll deal.

TRACY
You can't just give up.

DIANE
Actually,--

TRACY
You called her today?

DIANE
Horowitz? Yeah.

TRACY
Why today?

DIANE
Seemed like a fine time.

TRACY
I don't buy it.

DIANE
What.

TRACY
Why today?

DIANE
No reason.

TRACY
Come on, Di. It's me.

DIANE
So?

TRACY
So you and I both know you're not... whimsical.

DIANE
Good word.

TRACY
So what did it.
(beat)

DIANE

You know how I had to take Rebecca to the emergency room yesterday?

TRACY

She hit her head.

DIANE

My fault.

TRACY

Di, every mother thinks--

DIANE

No, it really was. I-- I was reading an article by a woman who was in my cohort -- of course she's associate faculty now, at NYU -- and I heard Rebecca in the kitchen. I could hear her climbing, but... I ignored it. I thought, damn it, I don't want to be interrupted again. Just this once, can't I just finish my thought? I kept my eyes on the page, even though I knew she wasn't...safe... and then I heard the thump, her head on the linoleum, and the moment of silence -- you know how they do that -- and in that moment, my heart stopped. All the times I've thought about how much I could accomplish if I were alone... they all vanished in that instant. All I wanted was to hear her scream. Please, God, let her scream.

(pause)

She let out the most bloodcurdling yell -- and I burst into tears, I was so grateful.

(pause)

So that's why. Because I can't be in two places at once. And I'm sick to death of trying. How do you do it?

TRACY

I don't want to be anywhere else. I never did.

DIANE

Lucky you.

SCENE 2

The liminal space. Yasodhara and Diane are facing the audience, looking in mirrors. Diane finishes drying her face with a cloth/towel, then straightens herself to do "affirmations:"

DIANE

(flatly)

I, Diane, am beautiful inside and out.

(pause)

Oh my god. This is... I, Diane-- Ugh, alright. I can do this.

(very quickly, flatly)
I Diane am beautiful inside and out. Oh, yeah.

YASODHARA
I, Yasodhara, am fine. I, Yasodhara, am fine. I am--
(pause)
You are not fine. You are alone. You have lost the one
thing that made your life worth living. He has left you.
And you are nothing.

*Diane looks more closely at her face, touches her
cheeks.*

DIANE
I, Diane am...

YASODHARA
I, Yasodhara am...

DIANE
I am...

YASODHARA
I am...

DIANE
What are you? You're a mess. Look at you.

YASODHARA
So ugly. It's no wonder he left you.

DIANE
You're just a big fat--

YASODHARA
Skin and bones...

DIANE
Pregnant--

YASODHARA
Bald...

DIANE
Pathetic excuse for a woman.

YASODHARA
Stop it.

DIANE
Knock it off.

DIANE & YASODHARA (CONT'D)
He didn't leave you because you're ugly.

No? DIANE (CONT'D)

No. YASODHARA

He left you because he loves humanity. DIANE & YASODHARA (CONT'D)

So how can you blame him? YASODHARA (CONT'D)

What kind of small, selfish person are you, to think that you're more important than all those people? DIANE

He is trying to save the world; what are you doing? YASODHARA

Staring in a mirror, feeling sorry for yourself. DIANE & YASODHARA (CONT'D)

Wake up. YASODHARA (CONT'D)

Get a grip. DIANE

Stop concerning yourself with such superficial-- DIANE & YASODHARA (CONT'D)

--bullshit-- DIANE (CONT'D)

--nonsense. YASODHARA

It's just a face. DIANE

It's just some hair. YASODHARA

You are beautiful. DIANE & YASODHARA (CONT'D)

I am beautiful. YASODHARA (CONT'D)

You are fine. DIANE & YASODHARA (CONT'D)

DIANE (CONT'D)
(flatly)

I am fine.

Beat. Diane tosses the towel.

Ugh. Enough already.

TRACY
(as she enters)

Yoo hoo!

Yasodhara picks up the towel and moves to the side, watching the following:

TRACY (CONT'D)

Ready to go?

Diane nods.

Rebecca's in the car. She had a great time this morning, figuring out how a juice box works... did you know you can shoot a stream of juice fifteen feet with one of those babies?

Diane forces a smile.

You okay?

DIANE

Fine.

Lights shift. Tracy & Diane exit.

SPOT on Yasodhara.

YASODHARA
(to the audience)

I wasn't either, and everyone knew it. Including my father. It wasn't long before he showed up, determined to bring me home and start my life over again. And Diane... well, see for yourself:

SPOT out. She exits.

SCENE 4

Lights up on Diane & Justin's apartment. Night. There is a knock at the door. Diane opens the door to reveal Baxter. A beat. Stunned, she stands there with her mouth open.

BAXTER
Well hello to you too, Diane.
(sees her large belly)
And company. Whoa.

DIANE
Baxter.

He holds his arms out. An awkward hug over her large belly.

BAXTER
This is completely weird. Check that out!

DIANE
I know, it's crazy. What are you--

BAXTER
Tracy said you might be here.

DIANE
Ha! I'm always here.

BAXTER
Yeah, she said that too.
(pause; standing in doorway)
So, could I--

DIANE
Oh! Yeah! I'm sorry, I'm just so surprised... Come in. I was just-- Do you want anything? Coffee?

BAXTER
I gave up caffeine.

DIANE
Wow.

BAXTER
Wow zow. When are you due?

DIANE
Five, six weeks... Are you-- is it a business trip?

BAXTER
No. Girl? Boy?

DIANE
Don't know yet. So you're just... here for...

BAXTER
What's up with your face?

DIANE
You haven't changed in the slightest.

BAXTER
Yes I have. I'm even better-looking now.

DIANE
Oh my god. Perfect.

BAXTER
Poison ivy?

DIANE
No. Anger.

BAXTER
Ooh, nice.

DIANE
Uh huh.

BAXTER
Tracy says you have a girl--

DIANE
Yep. Rebecca is two.

BAXTER
Talk about wow zow.

DIANE
Why?

BAXTER
It's just... not what I expected.

DIANE
(wryly)
What, you thought I'd have a boy?

BAXTER
Right.

DIANE
Do you have kids?

BAXTER
No.

DIANE
Oh.

Uncomfortable silence. Overlapping:

Baxter-- DIANE (CONT'D)

Diane-- BAXTER

Sorry-- DIANE

Go ahead-- BAXTER

Um... DIANE

What. BAXTER

So... why are you here? DIANE

To see you. BAXTER

No, I know you dropped by-- DIANE

No. BAXTER

No what. DIANE

No. I didn't just drop by. BAXTER

You-- DIANE

I flew out to the East Coast... to see you. BAXTER

I don't... why-- DIANE

I'm divorced, Diane. BAXTER

Oh! Well that's-- I'm sorry-- DIANE

Don't be. It's a good thing. BAXTER

DIANE

Okay.

BAXTER

It is. We were never... it wasn't... argh. Why is this so hard?

DIANE

Divorce is hard.

BAXTER

No, not that. Divorce was easy compared to-- to talking to you like this--

DIANE

Baxter. We're just talking.

BAXTER

I know, but-- there's so much to say.

DIANE

It's been awhile.

(pause)

BAXTER

Five years. To the day.

DIANE

Wait. No. Oh please tell me it's not...

BAXTER

Actually,--

DIANE

Baxter, I'm married!

BAXTER

I know, I was too. Look. About two months ago I had a conversation with Robert. And-- he told me. About you.

DIANE

What about me.

BAXTER

Just... how unhappy you were. That your husband's never home, that you quit the Phd program and were stuck at home--

DIANE

Stuck?

BAXTER

His words--

DIANE

Fine.

BAXTER

And that you were really depressed. Is that right?

DIANE

No, I'm -- I'm-- Ugh. I don't know. Probably.

BAXTER

So I just thought... oh god, I don't know, Diane, I just thought that maybe you-- maybe we-- that there might be some way I could help.

DIANE

You'd like to babysit?

BAXTER

Come on. I'm trying, here. I thought we might find some way back... to each other.

Long pause.

You're not saying anything.

DIANE

It's a lot to take in.

BAXTER

I know. I know. Diane, it kills me to see you like this.

DIANE

Like what.

BAXTER

Like... I don't know, just not living the life you always wanted. No career, no independence... you're too smart and too talented to be at home doing laundry 24/7. You know?

DIANE

Uh... I've had that thought.

BAXTER

Life should be more fun than that.

DIANE

Right.

BAXTER

We had a lot of fun, Diane.

DIANE

True.

Don't you want that? BAXTER

What. DIANE

Fun. BAXTER

Yeah... DIANE

Beat.

Work with me here. You got anything that's not monosyllabic? BAXTER

Maybe... how's that. DIANE

Swell. Anything else? BAXTER

DIANE
Baxter, I don't know what to say here. I haven't seen or heard from you in-- in five years-- and you just materialize and start telling me my life must be miserable, and then, that the obvious corollary to that is that I should what, run away with you? Walk away from this scene of-- of-- degradation and unfulfillment? Leave my kid and my absent husband a note, maybe?

You could bring the kid. We'd get a nanny. BAXTER

Oh, of course. DIANE

You could go back to school, finish the PhD, travel -- anything you want. Sky's the limit. BAXTER

Sounds pretty great. DIANE

It would be. I just want to see you happy, Di. BAXTER

I know. DIANE

BAXTER

It's all I've ever wanted.

(pause)

Hey! When was the last time you danced?

DIANE

I have no clue.

BAXTER

Tragic. Let's go--

DIANE

No.

BAXTER

Oh, yes.

Plays music.

Here we go... perfect.

DIANE

Baxter, I can't--

BAXTER

Yes you can. Both of you.

Starts fox-trotting without her.

Come on... look how silly this is with one person...

Dances over to her, offers his hand.

It would be so much better with three...

They dance.

Fun, right? Right?

She nods.

You know, you don't have to decide right now. I know we said five years, but I'll give you some leeway.

DIANE

Baxter, we were KIDS when we made that agreement.

BAXTER

We made that agreement because we loved each other. The timing just wasn't right. You had some stuff to work out, I just wasn't patient. Everything feels so right now, Di. My divorce, talking to Robert... like it's all meant to be.

DIANE

Huh.

BAXTER

Everything happens for a reason, Diane.

The song ends. They stand close, looking at each other. He attempts to kiss her wrist; she pulls away.

DIANE

You should probably go.

BAXTER

Probably. My number's still the same. Call me.

DIANE

I-- I will.

Lights down. Diane and Baxter exit as Yasodhara enters in SPOT, carrying a cloth, which she drapes over her head.

YASODHARA

I didn't give my father an answer right away. I knew this was a decision that would change the course of my life... and Rahula's too. So... I threw myself into study. I went back to what I was taught years ago, when Mita and I were young. But there were no words that spoke to me, that told me which path to take. Was I wasting my life? Or was all of this part of a bigger plan? I kept searching for an answer.

SPOT out. Yasodhara exits.

SCENE 5

Same. Diane, in pajamas, is lying on the couch in the dark. The sound of a key in the lock. Diane gets up, backs into the corner. Justin enters, carrying a backpack and duffel bag. Turns on a light. Diane exhales.

DIANE

Oh thank god--

JUSTIN

Hey!

DIANE

What are you--

JUSTIN

Why are you--

DIANE

God you scared me.

JUSTIN

Me too--

Why are you-- what-- DIANE

To surprise you. JUSTIN

Okay... DIANE

Don't I get a hug? JUSTIN

Yeah, of course. DIANE

They hug.
I can't believe you're here.

You feel so good. God I've missed you. JUSTIN

You look pretty tired. DIANE

So do you. Why are you up? JUSTIN

Rebecca's been throwing up. DIANE

She all right? JUSTIN

I don't know. I think so. DIANE

Justin goes into Rebecca's bedroom.
Why are you here?

I told you. God, she's beautiful. (pause) No fever. JUSTIN (O.S.)
Fluids?

Little sips. DIANE

Justin comes back out of the bedroom.
It doesn't seem right.

Are you all right? JUSTIN

Fine, yeah. DIANE

JUSTIN
No you're not. Are you feeling okay?

DIANE
Justin, I'm fine, okay? I'm just... shocked to see you.

JUSTIN
And not all that overjoyed--

DIANE
What do you want from me?

JUSTIN
I don't know -- maybe some enthusiasm? I just traveled 39 hours to get here.

DIANE
Sorry. I didn't ask you to do that for me.

JUSTIN
No?

DIANE
No!

JUSTIN
Well, some woman contacted Saba and told her I should come home now.

DIANE
What?! Are you serious??

JUSTIN
Yeah.

DIANE
What the... who would do that?

JUSTIN
Tracy?

DIANE
But why...

(realizes)
Oh god. I'm gonna kill her.

JUSTIN
Whatever, it doesn't matter. So I'm two months early for once. I'll make it work. (pause) God I'm exhausted. I've gotta crash.

He exits to bedroom.

DIANE

Really? Great! You do that. Let your pregnant wife stay up all night with your sick daughter. It'll be like you never came home. Sleep well!

She sits, folding laundry. His phone rings. She searches, finds it, answers:

Hey Jacques, he just got in. He's asleep. No, I'm not going to wake him up -- he's exhausted.

Justin appears in the doorway, in t-shirt and underwear.

JUSTIN

That Jacques?

DIANE

(to him)

Go back to bed--

(to phone)

He'll call you in the morning--

Justin approaches, motions for the phone. Diane hands it to him, goes back to folding.

JUSTIN

What's up. Oh, shit. Shit! I know we can't. Right. No, I'll handle it. Ummm... hey! Can you get to the exchange in Shivpuri? The Sonchiraiya, yeah, let's do that. I'll wire the money right now; it should be there by the time you get there. Okay. Right. Bye.

Justin goes into the bedroom, comes back zipping up his pants.

DIANE

Where are you going?

JUSTIN

To the hotel on Livingston. I think they do 24-hour money transfers.

DIANE

I can't even believe this.

JUSTIN

What.

DIANE

Too tired to help out your wife, but not too tired for Jacques--

JUSTIN

It's not Jacques I'm helping--

DIANE

Right--

JUSTIN

It's Amal and Rafiq and Mahesh and Saba, and all the other people over there who have NOTHING, you know? NOTHING.

DIANE

Why do they always, always take precedence over us, Justin? Why? Do we ever come first? Do I have to be a fucking refugee for you to care about us?

JUSTIN

They're depending on me, Diane! ME. No one else. And if I don't deliver, you know what happens? Huh? More people die, okay? They die!

(Beat.)

DIANE

And you win.

JUSTIN

What are you *talking* about?

DIANE

You win! That trumps all! How can I argue with that? How can I possibly say that ANYTHING in my life is as important as that? Ever?

JUSTIN

It's not a... a competition!

DIANE

No?

JUSTIN

No.

DIANE

You're right. It's not. I'm just a self-absorbed, callous bitch.

JUSTIN

Stop it.

DIANE

No, I am! My god, look at you, devoting your life to serving others, and I'm just complaining about the dishes and my lack of "alone time." What a bitch!

JUSTIN

I know you're unhappy--

DIANE
Unhappy! That's perfect!

JUSTIN
What's wrong with that?

DIANE
It doesn't even begin to describe what I am--

JUSTIN
Okay--

DIANE
But you wouldn't know that 'cause you're not around enough to know what I am.

JUSTIN
Well, I'm here now.

DIANE
No, you're on your way out the door.

JUSTIN
I don't know how to help you!

DIANE
So you don't even try?

JUSTIN
I can't argue with you--

DIANE
Fine! So go! Go save the world!
(Beat.)

JUSTIN
You know, maybe I'm just not the right person for you.

(Beat.)

DIANE
I HATE YOU!

She clutches her belly, draws a sharp intake of breath.

JUSTIN
Diane?

DIANE
Oh god-- oh my god-- no, no-- Justin--

She reaches out to him. He takes her hand. Blackout.

SCENE 6

India. Yasodhara stands, waiting. The King enters, sees her.

YASODHARA

Father...

She walks to him, they hug.

KING

My dear, poor little goat.

YASODHARA

I am fine, father.

KING

Are you? Look at you.

(he moves back the headcovering to reveal her bald head)

Kesa kalyana was yours, was it not? They all spoke of your glorious, luxuriant hair. Your mother, always brushing your locks to make them shine... On your wedding day, your hair was plaited and adorned with flowers...how radiant you were that day. And now...

YASODHARA

I was in love.

KING

Ah, I have failed you. This is all my fault.

YASODHARA

What?

KING

I should never have agreed to your union.

YASODHARA

No...

KING

It was foolish to tempt fate, to risk your future happiness. But I let myself be swayed by your certainty.

YASODHARA

I do not blame you, father.

KING

Such a sweet, forgiving soul.

Beat.

Now. It is time for you -- and Rahula -- to come home. My grandson! Where is he?

YASODHARA

Wait...I haven't made my decision yet.

KING

What?

YASODHARA

I'm still... not sure.

KING

Yasodhara. Please. The people of Koli Raj, your friends, your brother, everyone wants you to return home. You are still young; your hair can once again be beautiful. Are you hearing me, little goat?

YASODHARA

Yes.

KING

Good. Think of how your mother will dance with joy; she misses you so--

YASODHARA

I miss her too--

KING

I will also give word to the suitors that you are once more available--

YASODHARA

Wait-- what? Suitors?

KING

Yes, there are many who would gladly marry you--

YASODHARA

I am already married, father.

KING

Yasodhara, he left you. You owe him nothing. You have every right to a life of happiness with someone else if you choose.

YASODHARA

Yes, that is right. If I choose.

KING

Yasodhara. You are unhappy!

YASODHARA

Happiness is not all, father.

KING

What else is there?

YASODHARA

Siddhartha lived here for years, surrounded by nothing but beauty and bliss... but he still knew there was more to life.

KING

Siddhartha is an idiot. He had everything, and he threw it away! Including you. For what? To be an ascetic? A burden to society?

YASODHARA

I know it must seem so.

KING

It does not seem; it is. He is not only an idiot; he is a selfish, irresponsible boy. Anyone can see that.

YASODHARA

What we see with our eyes is not always the truth, father. You taught me that.

KING

Then I have failed. Again.

YASODHARA

Do not say that! What you taught me has served me all my life... why should it not serve me now? I am Siddhartha's wife, because I trusted what I felt. I cannot pretend that my love for him did not exist.

KING

Come home, Yasodhara. This is not the life for you.

YASODHARA

I...

KING

Come home.

SPOT on Yasodhara.

YASODHARA

(to audience)

"Two birds,
Golden hued and beautiful of wing
Cling to a common branch.
One has eaten of the sweet and bitter fruit of the tree
And laments his freedom,
The other has flown far and fast only to return,
Hungry for the sight of his companion.
The song they share on that common branch tells the truth:

They have always been, will always be
But one."

SPOT out.

YASODHARA (CONT'D)
(to King)

I am already home.

KING
I am... I am stunned. Stunned! Must you always make me look
like a fool?

YASODHARA
Father!

KING
After all I have done... given...

YASODHARA
You know I am grateful--

KING
This is not the face of gratitude.

YASODHARA
Please--

KING
I came here with only love in my heart for you, Yasodhara.
To help you.

YASODHARA
I know--

KING
You know nothing. You are still a willful child, blundering
about, doing just as she pleases. You disappoint me.

YASODHARA
No!

KING
I am going now. I came here to rescue my daughter. I am
leaving without a daughter at all.

YASODHARA
Please... father...

KING
I do not answer to that name. Goodbye.

He exits. Lights down.

SCENE 7

A hospital room. Diane is lying in bed, her back to the audience. Justin is seated at the end of the bed, his hand on her foot. She does not move during the following:

JUSTIN

(quietly)

The doctor's hopeful... He said-- he said he's seen preemies pull through that were this early... He's a good guy. I knew him in med school. It's weird, isn't it? You meet a person, and you have no idea what role they're going to play in your life.

(pause)

He suggested... he said that we might want to name her, that he's found that babies who have a name seem to pull through better, he doesn't know why... So... we hadn't really talked about it much... do you want to talk about it now?

(pause)

I feel like you should name her since I came up with Rebecca... it's your turn, you know...

(pause)

She's so small. Helpless. But I can tell she wants to live.

(pause)

Sweetheart?... I'm sorry. I'm sorry I don't understand. And that I haven't tried harder to help you... You've been sinking, and I didn't even see it. I-- want to find a way back to you. Please let me.

(pause)

So... there's supposed to be a therapist on staff that's excellent. I thought-- I thought maybe you'd... I'll go see if I can find them. I'll-- I'll be right back.

Justin leaves. A beat. Yasodhara in a white lab coat enters. She stands still, next to Diane's bed. After a long pause, Diane sits up and looks around.

YASODHARA

You're awake.

Diane nods.

You asked for me.

Diane shakes her head no.

Shall I go?

Pause. Diane shakes her head no. Yasodhara sits next to her.

Why are you so angry?

DIANE

I'm not.

YASODHARA
Your face tells me you are.

DIANE
My face.

YASODHARA
Yes.

DIANE
Okay.

YASODHARA
Tell me about it.

DIANE
My face? My baby is in an incubator, why should I talk about-- about something so--

YASODHARA
Would you rather talk about Zoe?

DIANE
Who?

YASODHARA
Or about feeling abandoned?

DIANE
How do you know that.

YASODHARA
Your face.

DIANE
Oh, please.

YASODHARA
That's what it says to me.

DIANE
Really. Then what else does it say?

YASODHARA
That... that maybe you need to remember who you really are.

DIANE
Are you for real? What self-help book did you step out of? I know who I am. Or was. I'm just not allowed to be it anymore.

YASODHARA
By--

DIANE

Who knows. All I know is that I was on a path -- every day I was getting closer and closer to my goal, and then boom! Suddenly I'm at the sink all the time, and I'm not doing anything I used to do... nothing! I'm not reading, God, I'm not even thinking. Everything I used to be is gone.

YASODHARA

So who are you now?

DIANE

Someone's mother.

YASODHARA

Whose?

DIANE

Rebecca's. And... and... she doesn't have a name yet. And she might not even... Go away. Just go away.

YASODHARA

It hurts, doesn't it.

DIANE

You're not helping. Platitudes and bullshit psychobabble. Aren't you supposed to make me feel better?

YASODHARA

No.

DIANE

No?

YASODHARA

No. You are.

DIANE

Great. That's not happening any time soon. There's a tiny little girl in the pediatric ICU who is hooked up to machines, who can't even breathe -- my baby -- ours -- it's horrible! It is just-- sad, it's unbelievably sad...

YASODHARA

It is.

DIANE

And you ask me how I feel!

YASODHARA

So why aren't you sad? Why are you angry instead?

DIANE

Because I-- I-- (breaks) Because it's my fault, okay? That's why. I did this to her, this little...

girl with no name... I did it... Oh my god, she didn't deserve it... I'm so sorry...

YASODHARA

She knows.

DIANE

What is wrong with me... what kind of-- My god. I don't know anything. I don't want to be... it all just hurts...

YASODHARA

I know. I feel it. Can you let it guide you?

DIANE

How do I do that?

YASODHARA

Breathe.

DIANE

That's all?

YASODHARA

Close your eyes, and breathe.

DIANE

Now?

Yasodhara nods.

Okay.

She closes her eyes, and breathes, herky-jerky. It slows, becomes rhythmic.

YASODHARA

Let it all fall away. Breathe. That's it. Breathe. Good.

The therapist places her hand in front of her forehead, unbeknownst to Diane.

DIANE

Oh!

The therapist takes away her hand. Diane opens her eyes.

I saw something...

YASODHARA

What.

DIANE

Birds. Yellow. Flocked on a tree branch. In an instant, they exploded up, out, together... wheeling into a blue sky... so bright...

(pause)
 What does that mean? Why did I see that?

YASODHARA
 Only you can answer that.

She stands to leave.

DIANE
 Do you have to go?

YASODHARA
 I'll be around.

DIANE
 Thank you.

YASODHARA
 You're welcome.

Beat.

Zoe means life.

Yasodhara leaves. Justin enters.

JUSTIN
 Hey, you're up. I couldn't find the therapist, but listen--
 it's such good news-- she's off the respirator. She's
 breathing on her own.

*She reaches out for him, he hugs her. She doesn't let
 go.*

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 It's okay. It's okay.

DIANE
 I'm so sorry...

JUSTIN
 So am I.

DIANE
 Zoe.

JUSTIN
 What?

DIANE
 Her name is Zoe.

SCENE 8

A few months later. Present day. Liminal space.

SPOT on Yasodhara as she enters, carrying a small book.

YASODHARA

And we find ourselves back where it all began.

Lights up on Diane at the sink, with the cloth/dishtowel in her hands.

DIANE

Oh, Dad.

(pause)

Why did I believe you?

(calling offstage)

Coming, Rebecca!

She puts dishtowel over her shoulder as she exits.

YASODHARA

After my father left, I knew. It was time to practice for real. It was not the simple clothes, or eating one meal a day, or even....

She takes off the bald wig and frees her hair.

...shaving my head that connected me to my beloved Siddhartha. It was meditation, pure and simple. Though not easy. Here's a book that Diane bought, a few months after her time in the hospital.

She opens it, reads.

YASODHARA (CONT'D)

"If we practice, gradually we will experience a greater sense of inner peace. When the sea is rough, sediment churns up and the water is murky. But when the wind dies down, the mud settles and the water becomes clear."

Diane enters.

DIANE

Okay. Let's do this.

SPOT on Yasodhara fades as they both sit. Diane drapes the cloth like a shawl over her shoulders.

YASODHARA

"First, find yourself in a comfortable position..."

They both wiggle.

YASODHARA (CONT'D)

"--with the back straight, to prevent the mind from getting sleepy or sluggish."

They both straighten themselves.

YASODHARA (CONT'D)

"Sit with the eyes closed, and turn your attention to your breathing. At first, the mind will be very busy. Simply breathe and allow the thoughts to come and go."

They both close their eyes, inhale and exhale together. There is a moment of peace. Then the Sounds, the voices that Siddhartha heard, start quietly, then grow in intensity. They both open their eyes in alarm. Yasodhara looks in the book.

YASODHARA (CONT'D)

"You might feel that the meditation is making your mind busier; in reality you are just becoming aware of how busy your mind actually is. Simply return your attention to the breath."

DIANE

Okay...

Diane closes her eyes, breathes. The Sounds fade, as Tracy/Mita and King/Baxter enter.

TRACY/MITA

You could just walk away from this life, you know.

KING/BAXTER

Come away. Leave it all behind.

TRACY/MITA

You had so much fun.

KING/BAXTER

You used to be so beautiful. So talented.

TRACY/MITA

Shouldn't you do what you want?

Yasodhara opens her eyes, reads:

YASODHARA

"There will be a great temptation to follow the different thoughts as they arise. Resist this, remain focused on the breath."

Diane and Yasodhara inhale, exhale deeply.

TRACY/MITA
You should at least be doing something.

KING/BAXTER
You could be dancing--

TRACY/MITA
This isn't reality--

DIANE
Focus.

TRACY/MITA
--this is just wasting time!

YASODHARA
Breathe.

TRACY/MITA
You could be riding a horse right now, across a field in the sun...

KING/BAXTER
No one expects you to do this.

TRACY/MITA
Race you to the stables!

KING/BAXTER
Why bother?

YASODHARA
I will find the truth.

Justin/Siddhartha joins the other two.

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA
You are so lonely. The truth is that you are empty without him.

DIANE
No...

YASODHARA
I will empty myself to remember my true self.

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA
But you miss him--

YASODHARA
Breathe.

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA
You will always love him.

Breathe. DIANE

If he loved you why didn't he stay? JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

Breathe! DIANE & YASODHARA

As you breathe you allow the pain-- JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

I feel it. DIANE & YASODHARA

Such pain. JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

Pain hurts! Who needs it! TRACY/MITA

Why suffer? KING/BAXTER

Drugs are great... TRACEY/MITA

Through the pain comes learning. I remember-- YASODHARA

Let it go, just be present. DIANE

Your life will be greater than a queen's. KING/BAXTER

Ha! Sitting on the floor, hairless, joyless-- TRACY/MITA

This is not a life of greatness. You could have been Vice-President. KING/BAXTER

How do you measure greatness? JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

Power? KING/BAXTER

Beauty? TRACY/MITA

Wealth? KING/BAXTER

TRACY/MITA

Knowledge?

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

There is a greatness that transcends all that, and it begins with--

YASODHARA

SILENCE!

(All are silent. Then:)

KING/BAXTER

Why is finding silence so difficult?

TRACY/MITA

Argh! How much time has passed?

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

Why are you worried about it?

TRACY/MITA

Life is fleeting!

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

Stop thinking. Allow the thoughts to pass you by.

YASODHARA

I want silence.

TRACY/MITA

Is that your child in the hallway? Maybe she needs you--

KING/BAXTER

You could do this later--

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

You can hear his voice and love him and let him go.

YASODHARA

Yes... I can do that. Silence. Nothingness. A deep pool--

TRACY/MITA

To swim in. You must teach your child how to swim--

YASODHARA

Stop! Who is doing this?

ALL THREE

Me!

JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

You cannot control your own thoughts.

It's insane! TRACY/MITA

What is wrong with you? KING/BAXTER

Nothing! JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

There are too many voices! YASODHARA

QUIET, all of you! DIANE & YASODHARA (CONT'D)

There is silence.

Good. YASODHARA (CONT'D)

(long pause)

See? You can do this. DIANE

Yes. YASODHARA

(pause)

Truth lies within. Truth lies within. Truth lies within. DIANE & YASODHARA (CONT'D)

You said that three times. TRACY/MITA

So? Why are you counting? JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

Why not? Counting is fine. KING/BAXTER

No, it's back in your head again. JUSTIN/SIDDHARTHA

Um, and where are you? TRACY/MITA

So what? You're in your head, too. KING/BAXTER

Go away! ALL THREE

YASODHARA

(in desperation)

Help, Mahadeva, help me! I am drowning in a sea of my own making -- give me something, anything, a life raft to cling to, to float above them...

Yasodhara picks up the book again to read. Nods. She closes her eyes, takes a deep breath, and speaks

YASODHARA (CONT'D)

Om... shanti, shanti, shanti.

Simultaneously: Lights down except for SPOTS on Yasodhara and Diane; Diane bursts out laughing. Yasodhara tips her head up toward the light, eyes still closed, smiles, nods. Diane continues to laugh.

Lights out.

SCENE 9

Lights up on Diane, seated, holding open a large children's book.

DIANE

Alright, just a little more, it's late. Daddy'll be happy you like his present so much. I know. I wish he were here too. Where... Okay.

(reads)

"The next day Siddhartha met a man in a saffron robe" -- saffron means yellow -- "a saffron robe who seemed completely at peace. 'Who are you?' asked the prince. The man, who was a monk, replied, 'I am a seeker of Truth, of life over death. And to find it I have given up everything on this earth.' Prince Siddhartha decided to leave the palace, his riches, his father, and his wife to follow in the monk's footsteps."

(mutters)

Here we go again.

(reads)

"Siddhartha's heart was torn, because he knew that he must follow his destiny, which did not include raising his child." Hmmph.

(reads)

"After gazing upon his wife and child for the last time, Siddhartha crept out of the palace." What? He didn't even say goodbye?

(reads)

"Chandaka saddled his master's horse, and the prince left his home life forever." Forever? That was it? What about Yasodhara?

She flips through pages.

Six years with hermits... sits under the bodhi tree...
I know, Rebecca, I'm just looking for something... Becomes
enlightened, Four Noble Truths, Eight-fold Path, blah blah
blah... here.

(reads)

"The people of the kingdom were moved by the Buddha, and many
left the palace to follow him, including his wife, Yasodhara,
and his son, Rahula."

Flips for more.

That's it? She's stuck at home for seven years with the kid
and that's all we hear about her? Fucking hell! Oh! Oh,
honey, no -- I'm not angry at the book. No, I just thought
there would be more about the Princess. I don't know, maybe
there is a book all about her. There should be.

(pause)

No, you're right. Those are some bad words. Mommy made a
mistake. Okay. It's time for sleep, sweet beautiful girl.
I love you. Happy, happy birthday, Rebecca. Sleep well...

She turns out the light.

SCENE 10

*India, six years later. The lake outside the palace.
Sounds of baby frogs peeping. Yasodhara is seated,
eyes closed, smiling up at the sun. Mita enters, a
folded cloth cupped in her hands.*

MITA

Princess, I have something for you.

YASODHARA

Yes?

MITA

A gift from your son!

YASODHARA

Mita, it's not my birthday, it's his--

MITA

Look!

(opens the cloth)

Isn't he gorgeous?

YASODHARA

Ohhh... so small and green... he's perfect--

MITA

Look at those tiny webbed feet.

(pause)

YASODHARA

Life begins again.

The frog jumps out of Mita's hands. They both exclaim, then follow his progress.

MITA

Oh! Where are you going?

YASODHARA

Back to the lake, so determined--

MITA

Those tiny legs-- hop, hop, hop--

YASODHARA

Goodbye little one!

MITA

And... plop!

They both laugh.

YASODHARA

A lovely gift.

MITA

(sits next to Yasodhara)

Rahula is having such fun, Princess--

YASODHARA

As are you--

MITA

Yes indeed. And you?

YASODHARA

It's a glorious day.

MITA

(wry)

The sun, apparently, did not depart forever.

YASODHARA

Ha! So true, Mita. No, it did not. You are your own sun, I have learned. You probably knew that all along.

MITA

Maybe.

Beat.

YASODHARA

Mita.

MITA

Yes, my friend.

YASODHARA

I want to thank you.

MITA

The frog was from Rahula--

YASODHARA

Stop. You know what I mean. You have been... loyal, and steadfast. Through my darkest hours... I had only to reach out and you were there, always. You left your home to live with me. You gave up having a family of your own.

MITA

I did so lovingly, and would again.

YASODHARA

My dear Mita, there are no words--

MITA

None are necessary.

There is the sound of a splash.

YASODHARA

Rahula!

MITA

Stay. I'll take him inside--

Mita exits. Yashodhara watches, smiles at them. She walks to the edge of the lake.

YASODHARA

Which is the best lotus?

She sees something.

Well, hello there. You will never be the same, will you, Mr. Froggy. You have rested in the palm of God! You cannot tell them what you've seen. Few will believe you, and the rest will simply swim away, unmoved by your story. Do you ask yourself, why me? Of all the frogs in this lake, why was I lifted up and out? Because you were beautiful. Because you were ready. And because it was your destiny.

(pause)

So, how does it feel to be free?

MITA (O.S.)

Yasodhara!

Mita rushes in.

Princess-- MITA (CONT'D)

What is it-- YASODHARA

He is here. MITA

Who-- YASODHARA

Siddhartha. He has returned. As a Buddha! MITA

Yasodhara stands still, taking it in. Then she turns away and stares across the lake.

Princess? (pause)

Yasodhara? Did you hear--

Yes. YASODHARA

Rahula has run out to meet him. MITA

As he should. YASODHARA

Why do you not...? MITA

I-- (pause)

Siddhartha is... he is a Buddha now. He does not need me. He cannot need me. YASODHARA

But... MITA

I will wait. Do you understand? YASODHARA

No. He is still your husband. MITA

Sannyasis have no wives, Mita. YASODHARA

But-- you have waited so long for this day, to be in his presence-- MITA

YASODHARA

I have. Waiting has become my great skill. And so I can wait... for him to come to me.

Yasodhara and Mita freeze. Lights shift. Diane enters talking on the phone.

DIANE

(excited)

Her name was Yasodhara. No, there's almost nothing written about her. It's amazing, Justin. It's like these two liberation stories, juxtaposed: the Buddha's journey out in the world, next to her story of enlightenment through ordinary domestic suffering. Do you know that in some parts of the world, Yasodhara is revered as having attained the status of a buddha herself -- not as a renunciate, but as a householder?

(laughs)

Yeah, I know-- I'm back. But just imagine what the world would look like if history had chosen to tell the story of both of them, together? Our entire culture has been shaped by religions that present only one half, the male half, of the enlightenment story. What if--

(pause)

Exactly! And the lives of millions of women! Justin-- I'm thinking that... I'd like to write about her. I'm not sure. Not right away, I know. I wish. Maybe when the girls are both in school... I know you want to help. I do. Thanks, darling. We'll figure it out.

(pause)

What? Can you hear me? I'm here. Justin?

She hangs up as she exits:

Argh.

Lights shift. SPOT up on Yasodhara.

YASODHARA

My tale is almost finished here. Siddhartha does come to find me, and in most versions, I fall to the floor in a blubbering heap, accusing him of abandoning me. That's not how it went.

SPOT out. Siddhartha enters.

SIDDHARTHA

Yasodhara.

They stand in place, gazing at each other.

MITA

She-- missed you so--

Siddhartha nods.

She will not tell you, Buddha Deva. Ever since you left her, Yasodhara has lived the life of a bhikshuni. When she heard you were wearing yellow robes, she also robed herself in yellow. She prays with all her heart, sleeps on the bare floor, wears no jewels--

She stops as Siddhartha holds up his hand, but then:
She has suffered greatly, Siddhartha.

SIDDHARTHA

I know, Mita. Thank you. Would you allow us...?

*Mita nods, exits. Siddhartha whistles the bird song.
Yasodhara attempts to whistle back, but cannot.*
My dear Yasodhara.

YASODHARA

My dear lord.

SIDDHARTHA

You are not the Yasodhara I whispered goodbye to.

YASODHARA

Nor are you the same Siddhartha.

SIDDHARTHA

No. You are still... so beautiful. The light burns so bright within you.

(pause)

We cannot be what we were before.

YASODHARA

I know. So why did you return?

SIDDHARTHA

I came here to bring you the treasure for which I left you, my dear. But I can feel you have already found your own. You are free from want.

YASODHARA

Yes. All I ever wanted... was you.

SIDDHARTHA

And now...?

YASODHARA

Now... Pain taught me how to let go.

SIDDHARTHA

Yasodhara.

YASODHARA

Yes, Siddhartha.

SIDDHARTHA

I know what you have done, for Rahula, and for my sake. All that I am now, I owe to you.

Holds hands in prayer position, bows his head.
I am grateful.

She returns the gesture.

YASODHARA

And I, to you. We gave each other just what we needed.

SIDDHARTHA

Yes.

YASODHARA

So beautiful.

He nods, steps forward and holds his two hands out to her.

SIDDHARTHA

Come. There is much to say. And more beauty to create.

He freezes as SPOT up on Yasodhara.

YASODHARA

(to audience)

It's time for me to go, now. Oh, and in case you're curious, Diane did write a book about me. That's why I'm here: she found me. Or maybe I found her. Or both. But before she started writing, well, see for yourself.

SPOT out. She takes his hands, they exit together.

SCENE 11

Diane and Justin's apartment. Diane is doing a headstand against the wall. Knock on the door.

DIANE

Come in!

Tracy enters.

TRACY

Whoa -- look at you, Deepak Chopra.

DIANE

(strained)

Don't make me laugh -- my head will explode.

TRACY
 Roger. Kids in bed?

DIANE
 Yep.

TRACY
 Great. I brought *Singin' in the Rain* and some Marx Brothers thing. No more *Casablanca* for you.

DIANE
 Thanks--

TRACY
 Is that really good for you?

DIANE
 Uh huh--

TRACY
 Really?

DIANE
 Can't talk--

TRACY
 Okay. I'll talk. I heard about this book you'd love. It's about this woman who finds god by spending four months eating in Italy, four months meditating in India, and four months banging some guy in Indonesia--

DIANE
 Ugh! I read it--

TRACY
 Did you love it?

DIANE
 Wait--

Comes down from headstand.
 No. It totally pissed me off.

TRACY
 What? Why?

DIANE
 Give me a break, Trace. No job, no kids, no bills to pay.... just living at an ashram or eating gelato every day or having sex non-stop. Who couldn't attain enlightenment under those circumstances?

TRACY
 You kill me.

DIANE

What happens when she's married? With a couple of kids, a mortgage? What then?

TRACY

It really did piss you off.

DIANE

Yeah, it did! It's just more of the same hero-quest bullshit; that you have to leave your life behind in order to find your true purpose.

TRACY

Maybe you do.

DIANE

No you don't. Have you ever wondered why we never hear about the ones who stick it out?

TRACY

Aahh, no. Not this again.

DIANE

Sorry.

TRACY

Yeah, you should be. I'm gonna have plenty to say about it in three months.

DIANE

Oh, Tracy--

TRACY

Nope! Huh uh. We're not gonna talk about it now.

DIANE

Okay. Okay.

(pause)

Well, what about enlightenment?

TRACY

What about it.

DIANE

Do you ever think about it?

TRACY

I'm planning to do that in my fifties.

DIANE

Good plan.

TRACY

Thanks.

(pause)

Hey, your face is looking better.

DIANE

I think so too. Finally.

TRACY

You seem good.

DIANE

I am. Not perfect...

TRACY

You know, if you could let go of perfect, your good would be even better.

DIANE

I know. You're right. I'll put it on the list.

TRACY

Wait wait wait.

DIANE

What.

TRACY

If it goes on the list, then you've got one more thing to beat yourself up about.

DIANE

But I want to work on it.

TRACY

Di, letting go of something doesn't have to be work. Watch.

She picks up a cloth, holds it in front of her, opens her hand and lets it fall.

See?

DIANE

Yeah, but that was something you didn't care about.

TRACY

So... you want to be perfect?

DIANE

Don't most people?

TRACY

I don't.

DIANE

Maybe perfect is the wrong word. "Enlightened."

TRACY

Those aren't the same thing.

DIANE

Most enlightened people are perfect. The ones we hear about, anyway. Buddha was perfect.

TRACY

He was rotund! You want to be rotund?

DIANE

Oh my god, you are-- He was not--

TRACY

Okay, so maybe someday you will be Buddha-like, minus the rolls of fat. But he didn't start out that way. And you're not there today. Agreed?

DIANE

Agreed.

TRACY

So can you accept that?

DIANE

Umm... yes. No.

TRACY

'Cuz until you do, really, you're not going to be happy.

DIANE

Yeah--

TRACY

Look. All this yoga crap and meditation are clearly tripping your trigger. Great. Fabu. But I gotta tell you what else I see.

DIANE

Of course you do.

TRACY

You're driving yourself. You're holding yourself to impossibly high standards, just like you used to, only you've found new yardsticks to beat yourself up with.

DIANE

No.

TRACY

Yes. Yes. You're constantly monitoring yourself. It's like a standardized test of spiritual enlightenment, and you can't ever get a perfect 800. Is any of this ringing a bell?

DIANE

Maybe.

TRACY

Good.

DIANE

Not just maybe. Yes.

TRACY

Really good.

DIANE

Okay, psych major, so what am I supposed to do about it?

TRACY

Here.

She picks up a yellow rubber duck, hands it to Diane.
Now. Let it go.

DIANE

(dreamy)

It's yellow.

TRACY

Yep, and it's waiting to fly. Go on. Drop it.

Diane holds it out in front of her. Turns her hand over. Drops it as the doorbell rings. They look at each other in amazement.
Holy shit.

DIANE

That was amazing.

TRACY

Are you expecting someone?

DIANE

No...

She opens the door.
Baxter! Oh! God!

BAXTER

Hi Diane...

TRACY

Baxter. Now what a surprise. I thought you lived, like, three thousand miles away.

BAXTER

Great to see you too, Tracy. (to Diane) Can we talk?

DIANE

Sure...

TRACY

This should be good.

DIANE

Trace--

TRACY

I know, I know. I'm flying the coop. Here.
(hands Diane the duck)
Keep him away from the fox!

DIANE

Would you just go?

TRACY

Great to see ya, Bax! We should all do lunch together, *when Justin gets home*. When is that, again?

DIANE

Bye!

TRACY

Bye!

BAXTER

Bye!

She exits. Pause.

DIANE

Sorry...

BAXTER

Don't be. She's just doing her job.

DIANE

Which is?

BAXTER

Emasculating men.

DIANE

(laughs) Oh, right.

(pause)

I'm sorry I never called. I was going to, but... a lot happened, and I--

BAXTER

It's fine, Di. It was a long shot, I know. But I wanted to hear it from you. In person. Because...

(pause)

Oh, just because I love you, Diane. I always have.
(long pause)

DIANE

And...I'll always-- have a spot in my heart--

BAXTER

Oh, god, not that. Please.

DIANE

Okay.

BAXTER

I was right all along, wasn't I. You... you didn't love me enough.

DIANE

No, it's not that.

(something dawns)

Oh god... it *is* that. I *didn't* love you enough. Wait, that sounds terrible. But it wasn't just you, Baxter! I didn't love enough, *period*. Whoa... Oh my god, Bax, I always thought I was on this planet to do something big, you know? But these last couple years have been about achieving something else. It's like... learning on a completely different level.

BAXTER

What the hell are you talking about?

DIANE

It sounds nuts, doesn't it. But... all of this. All of the work I do, the laundry, the dishes-- the sheer tedium of it all... who would choose to show up for any of that, unless it was for love? Love for my husband, for Rebecca and Zoe who depend on me, even for all those people who are depending on Justin. Love is only the reason anyone shows up, Baxter. Oh! And my dad! He showed up every day, for the same reason.

(She hugs him.)

Thank you, Baxter--

BAXTER

Glad to be of service--

DIANE

Thank you, thank you--

BAXTER
No prob.

DIANE
Do you get it?

BAXTER
Not really. But you seem happy.

DIANE
I am.

BAXTER
I'm fucking miserable, but that's nothing new.

DIANE
I'm sorry...

BAXTER
Hey, whatever.
(pause)
So, you bailing on the PhD?

DIANE
I'll come back to it someday. Life is long.

BAXTER
And in the meantime, you're just gonna what, fold clothes?
What the hell happened to gender equality?

DIANE
Actually... I've been doing a little preliminary research for
a mythopoeic book about the wife of the Buddha that gets to
the heart of that question.

BAXTER
Huh. Too bad you're not the one in India.

DIANE
Not yet. But that's where I'm going. Our lease is up in
three months.

BAXTER
(stunned)
You're *moving* there?

DIANE
I know, it's crazy, right? But the last time Justin came
home, we decided we needed to do this, for us, for the
girls... it just makes so much sense.

The sound of Zoe crying.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Oh! That's Zoe.

(as she exits)

Hang on.

Comes back in, carrying a bundle of cloths gently.

Turns off a light, settles on couch to nurse.

Do you mind?

BAXTER

No, no...

DIANE

(to Zoe)

Hello, pumpkin...There you go...

He watches them for a few moments. Diane is totally focused on Zoe.

BAXTER

The way you look at her... I've never seen you look at anyone that way. Wow. As if I needed any more nails in this coffin.

(pause)

I'm gonna head out.

DIANE

Wait. She's out there, you know.

BAXTER

Who.

DIANE

The one who will look at you that way.

BAXTER

Yeah, well. Hopefully she won't want to chew on my nipple. Be well, Di.

DIANE

You too. And thank you. For-- oh my god, for--

BAXTER

Don't, okay?

DIANE

Okay. Bye, Bax.

BAXTER

Bye, Diane.

He leaves. Diane looks skyward. Pause.

DIANE

Hey... thanks, Dad. I had no idea how much you... but I get it now. Thank you.

(beat)

You know, I'm probably not going to be Vice-President, but I'm really okay with that. I'm guessing you are too.

(she looks offstage)

Rebecca, why are you up, sweetie? Was it the door? Oh. Well come here, lie down on the couch. That's it. Sure, I'll tell you a story. Oh! Okay.

Yasodhara enters, smiles. Opens a large children's book.

DIANE (CONT'D)

Once upon a time...

Diane continues as Yasodhara reads aloud:

DIANE & YASODHARA (CONT'D)

...a long time ago, in a village in India called Koli Raj, a princess was born.

YASODHARA (CONT'D)

Her name... was Yasodhara.

END OF PLAY