

SHAKESPEARE *in Saigon*

A play by Cenarth Fox

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Reviews



An absolutely charming, funny and thoughtful piece that really makes you feel a lot better after seeing it. The play is fresh and new and of today. It's bubbling with some very funny one-liners and has some rather poignant moments. It's one of the most delightful plays I have seen in a long time; a damn good night at the theatre. Highly recommended. **John Gunn – Curtain Up**

A delightful play, beautifully written—an unusual and moving love-story with Shakespeare as matchmaker. Don't miss it. Cenarth Fox's plays are exceptional. **Eastern FM 98.1**

A delightful and touching piece of theatre which would be ideal for somewhere like Sydney's Ensemble Theatre in Neutral Bay. **John Bell – Bell Shakespeare**

A brilliant play, absolutely not to be missed, one out of the box. **Marie Ryan 96.5**

It is terrific. Very well done, very well acted and it does hit home. But definitely go and see it, it's really worth it. **Peter Kemp 88.3FM**

An exceptional piece of theatre which makes you laugh and cry. There is wonderful use of language, humour and pathos throughout the play. Don't miss it. 5 stars. **Joan Amos**

The process of David teaching Thanh to speak English using the words of the Bard is cleverly written and most humorous. **Melbourne Observer**



Ai Diem Le (Thanh) and Alastair Rice (David) in STAG's premiere season 2015

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Synopsis

It's *Pygmalion* in Footscray. David Cadwallader is about to retire as a high school English Literature teacher but suddenly faces major problems. He plans to travel, enjoy theatre and write but suddenly his family and fortunes head south. He moves house in a new world—a foreign suburb.

Kim Thanh Nguyen is a young Vietnamese woman recently arrived in Melbourne. She's had an amazing life's journey, speaks no English and is an outworker making clothes for a pittance. She lives with her paternal grandparents who speak only Vietnamese.

Julia is David's elderly widowed mother. She's in poor health, or thinks she is, is wealthy and selfish. These three main characters form part of a love story with a difference.

Dialogue

The play is written in English, Elizabethan English and Vietnamese with a smidgeon of Greek.

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Characters

David is in his 60s. He loves great literature especially the Bard. He's a brilliant but unconventional teacher using the Marx Brothers to introduce Shakespeare. He wears his heart on his sleeve. He discovers a lot about himself when faced with difficult and unexpected problems. How he reacts to sadness and loss is painful then exciting. How he relates to a young woman and his elderly mother reveal much about this fascinating man.

Thanh [rhymes with run] is a young Vietnamese woman, recently arrived in a new land. She lives with and is fiercely loyal to her elderly paternal grandparents. Thanh speaks no English and works extremely hard as an outworker. She lives in a working-class suburb with a strong Vietnamese community and shops only in Vietnamese-speaking shops. She would like to understand the language and culture of her newly-adopted country. She would like to find love.

Julia, the Matriarch, is David's mother and full of complaints. A widow, she moans rather than rages against the failing light. One of her adult children could cheerfully throttle her. Julia is elderly, lonely, wealthy and miserable. Her middle name is Misery-Guts.

Juliet is a teenage English Literature student in the final class taught by David. She is cheeky, means well and grateful to her "elderly" teacher for his teaching efforts.

Janice is the middle-aged school principal of the school from which David is about to retire. She is a hard-working, good-natured administrator.

Judith is David's wife and about his age. She is cold, blunt and gets what she wants.

First Performance

Shakespeare in Saigon was first staged by Encore Theatre Inc in August 2006. The production was directed by Doug Bennett and featured Fred Barker as David, Ai Diem Le as Thanh and Louise Whiteman as Mother. In 2015 the play was extensively re-written and the premiere season was staged by the Strathmore Theatrical Arts Group and featured the following cast. David (Alastair Rice), Thanh (Ai Diem Le), Julia (Shirley Cattunar), Janice (Carmel Behan), Judith (Kaye Mills) and Juliet (Sarah Cooper). The play was directed by the playwright.

Accents

Thanh speaks Vietnamese fluently but no English. David speaks English fluently but no Vietnamese. He has a strong grasp of Elizabethan English. His mother speaks posh. The accent of Juliet is young, of Janice it's plain and of Judith bitter.

Costumes

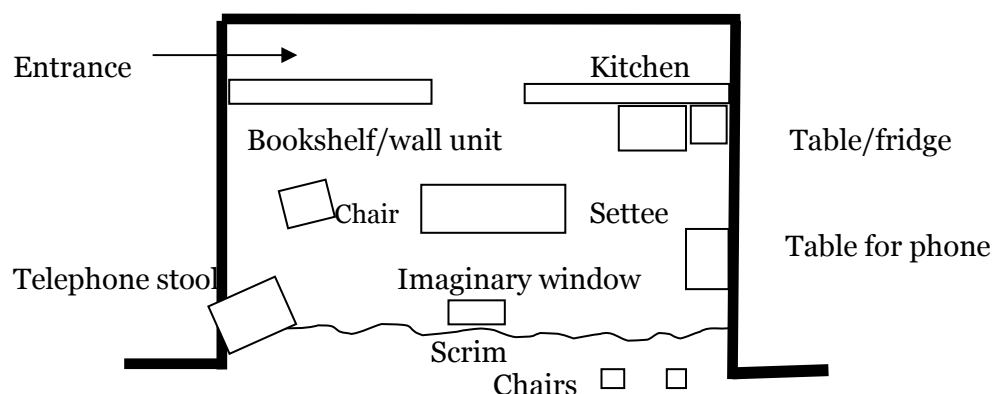
The play is set in the late 20st century. Appropriate business or casual clothes are worn although more formal attire is needed for one special occasion.

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Set Design

There are two basic settings - **outside** David's flat and **inside** David's flat. For the outside David's flat setting, there are five scenes [a] classroom, [b] staff-room [c] dining-room, [d] driveway and [e] street.

These five scenes could take place in front of a curtain, a scrim or a folding flat. The classroom and the kitchen are almost the same. All are imaginary with few if any props. Downstage area/s of an empty apron [DL, DC and DR] are lit when required. A scrim, flat or darkness hides the main set upstage which is the living-room in a small, basic flat or bedsit in a working-class suburb. Instead of a scrim, simply light the apron only and mainly from the sides or above preventing light spilling onto the living-room upstage. David had a long career as a teacher of English Literature in secondary schools and as an avid reader, has books and literary type "stuff" in his room. The front-door entrance is upstage right hidden by some open bookshelves. Once past the bookshelves, the actors enter the room which is dominated by an old settee which, at times, doubles as a bed for the reclusive David. Some nights he's too tired or too intoxicated to go to bed. There is an armchair RC and two small tables UL and LC. One is for kitchen items and is next to the fridge. The other has chairs either side and has a telephone and answering machine plus pencils and empty whisky bottle. UL there is a matching wall to the bookshelves and behind which is the bathroom. The flat is untidy. There is a phone table DR where Mother performs each of her scenes. She is lit when on the phone.



The Play

(Pre-show music is Elizabethan – Tallis, Byrd, Dowland, Gibbons and Morley. An optional downstage scrim blankets the stage. Lights come up DR. An alternative to the scrim is to simply light the stage apron. We see chairs which represent the classroom, staffroom and lounge-room in scenes 1, 2 and 3. The final year, Year 12, English Literature class is about to begin. The imaginary students are where the audience is seated. JULIET, a student, enters in darkness and awaits DAVID when lights come up. She sits facing the real audience. DAVID enters wearing jacket with leather patches on sleeves, collar and tie and corduroy trousers. He's old school. It's circa 2000 in Melbourne, Australia. DAVID has a satchel in which JULIET's essay is hiding. NOTE: You could use a Greek chorus as students and staff members in the first two scenes. Julia, Janice, Judith are students hidden behind the bookshelf in the first scene and Juliet and Janice swap places for Scene 2. JULIA could be in the Greek Chorus DR near where she enters to speak on the telephone)

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Act One - Scene One

- DAVID** *(Enters)* Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.
- JULIET** *(With Greek Chorus, sing-song a la primary school students)* Good morning, sir.
- DAVID** *(Placing satchel on his chair/floor)* And for the final time, I return herewith thy literary contributions.
- JULIET** Did I pass, sir? Please?
- DAVID** But soft, methinks thou art privy.
- JULIET** I really do need a good mark, sir.
- DAVID** Don't we all? *(To EVERYONE)* Now children, it may have escaped your attention but today's lesson is the last I shall give to you lot.
- JULIET** *(Clapping, celebrating)* Hooray.
- DAVID** *(Comes in over end of their cheering)* ... to not only you but to anyone, anywhere, ever.
- JULIET** Ahhh. Come on sir, you're too young to retire.
- DAVID** So I'm inclined to turn today's lesson into somewhat of an insouciant ceremony.
- JULIET** *(With Greek Chorus makes Music Hall audience reaction - ooooooh)* Insouciant?
- DAVID** And you'll notice I said cerem'ny and *(Rising inflexion)* not ...
- JULIET** *(Plus Greek Chorus. This pronunciation point has been made many times before)* ... cer - e - moan - ey.
- JULIET** If you've taught us nothing else, sir, we know how to put the emphasis on the right syllable. *(It's a joke/point DAVID has hammered throughout the year)*
- DAVID** Ah yes but will you ever truly appreciate the beauty of the writings of that doyen of wit and perspicacity...
- JULIET** *(Giving what she thinks is the correct answer)* William Shakespeare.
- DAVID** ... that profound philosopher, Groucho Marx.
- JULIET** Oh, *that* great doyen.
- DAVID** Who once said, *(As Groucho)* "Those are my principles and if you don't like them ...
- JULIET** *(JULIET mimics Groucho along with Greek Chorus)* ... well I have others."
(They laugh and relax. This last lesson is one to be savoured. DAVID finds it emotional and the class will be sad to see him go)
- JULIET** So's who's the best, sir, Groucho or Will?
- DAVID** *(Correcting her)* Who is the *better*, young lady, *(Mimicing young people's speech)* them's just the two like.
- JULIET** *(Remembers)* Oh, I remember - good, better, best.
- DAVID** *(As Henry Higgins)* "By George, she's got it."
- JULIET** Before I took this subject, I knew nothin' about William Shakespeare *or* Groucho Marx but now, thanks to you, sir, I know two Shakespearean sonnets, Juliet's 'wherefore art thou?' speech and heaps of Groucho gags.
- DAVID** *(As Groucho)* "While hunting in Africa I shot an elephant in my pyjamas ..."
- JULIET** *(With GC as Groucho)* "... and how he got in my pyjamas I'll never know."
(They laugh a little. This is fun. It's the last lesson and everyone is relaxing)
- DAVID** *(As Groucho)* "I never forget a face, but in your case, ..."
- JULIET** *(With GC as Groucho)* "... I'll be glad to make an exception."
(More laughter, more enjoyment. DAVID is feeding JULIET who responds in kind)
- DAVID** *(As Groucho)* "I didn't like the play, but then I saw it under adverse conditions."
- JULIET** *(With GC as Groucho)* "The curtain was up."
(Laughter and more opening up as the last lesson unfolds)
- DAVID** *(As Groucho, mimes speaking into a phone)* "Room service? Send up a larger room."

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- JULIET** *(Pause, laughter fades, they settle)*
(As herself) Y'know sir, my mother reckons we get much more than we deserve from your classes.
- DAVID** *(As himself)* Ah, thy mother is both comely and wise.
- JULIET** But sir?
- DAVID** *(Rising inflexion)* Yes?
- JULIET** My cousin's doing English Lit at her school and ...
- DAVID** *Doing* English Lit? *Doing* it? My dear young lady, one explores, discovers and savours the immortal beauty of the English language; one does not *do* it.
- JULIET** *(Ignores his comment)* As I was saying, they don't do no Shakespeare at all.
- DAVID** And rightly so. Why bother with a gent who created sublime poetry, invented hundreds of words and explored and explained the human condition better than anyone before or since?
- JULIET** *(Stops looking at essay)* Is that you being sarky again, sir?
- DAVID** *(Hands JULIET her essay)* Well done that man.
- JULIET** *(Sees her score/mark, is excited)* I passed! I passed! *(Goes to DAVID and hugs him)* Oh thank you, sir, thank you.
- DAVID** *(Gently rebuffing her affection)* Take flight maiden, "our revels now are ended". *(She sits)* As always I marked according to the golden rule of essay writing *(Prompting their reply)* which is ...
- JULIET** *(Chant-like, emphatically with GC)* ... answer the question being asked.
- JULIET** So what will you be doing in your retirement, sir?
- DAVID** Ah, methinks a multitude of wondrous things.
- JULIET** Such as?
- DAVID** *(Ponders whether he should be blunt)* Hmmm, perhaps the greatest being *not* having to teach a generation of adolescents who reckon ignorance is not only bliss but cool.
- JULIET** Aw, come on sir, it's not our fault.
- DAVID** It never is. Behold thy creed, *(Mimics their creed)* "Take no responsibility." Never mind the skills of spelling, sums and syntax, just get thyself to schoolies' week.
- JULIET** *(With GC clapping, delighted)* Yeah, schoolies! Rah.
- DAVID** *(Drab voice, mocking teen speak, pause for punch line, shrugs)* Whatever.
- JULIET** But that's what school's all about; exams and league tables. We regurgitate the facts and pray for a pass.
- DAVID** *(Mock shock)* Regurgitate? *(Louder)* Regurgitate? *(Mock shock)* But that's *(Quick count on fingers)* four syllables; plus philosophy. *(Mock pleasure)* Maybe all is not lost after all.
- JULIET** Y'know, sir, you're one of them teachers, what makes us think.
- DAVID** *(Crescendo)* Those teachers *who* make us think.
- JULIET** But do you agree with my father?
- DAVID** Ah yes, the parent who reckons corporal punishment should be replaced by capital punishment.
- JULIET** My Dad reckons you've gotta be real smart to go to uni.
- DAVID** Really? So does Dad know there are unis running remedial classes for first-year students who can't spell or write a half-decent sentence?
- JULIET** Well you're the teacher. If we can't spell or ain't never heard of Shakespeare then it's all your fault.
- DAVID** *(Mock dramatic)* Oh, mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.
- JULIET** And why do you always show off like now - speaking French?
- DAVID** *(Genuinely shocked, exasperated or both)* French!?
- JULIET** Whatever.

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FX *Bell rings for end of class*
DAVID *(Looks to the heavens)* There is a god.
(DAVID fiddles with satchel as he speaks, the imaginary students pass him heading upstage)
DAVID Right, that's it. Parting is such sweet sorrow and all that jazz; now bugger off.
JULIET *(Stops beside DAVID as she exits)* I just wanted to say ... thank you, sir.
DAVID "O! she doth teach the torches to burn bright." Now damsel, sling y'hook.
(He doesn't want an emotional farewell and turns to gather his things. She has been rehearsing this moment. Pause so DAVID looks up)
JULIET "Your presence makes us rich, most noble lord. And far surmounts our labour to attain it."
(DAVID is stunned. He knows the Richard the Second quote of course. But the words are delivered well and are sincerely meant. Pause. For a moment nothing happens. Then JULIET leans in, kisses his cheek then scampers out as the PA kicks in)
FX *(Voice over tannoy)* "Would Mister Cadwallader please go to the staffroom. Mister Cadwallader to the staffroom."
DAVID *(Unhappy)* Oh Gawd - bloody presentation.

Act One - Scene Two

FX *Brief musical interlude using a few bars of Elizabethan music*
(Lights crossfade down on the classroom and up on the staffroom. It could be the same room. Staff members are where the audience is seated. JULIET'S chair could become the chair for DAVID. He enters and moves chair if necessary)
FX *Crowd noises welcoming DAVID. Includes smattering of applause. Greek Chorus now members of staff upstage behind bookshelf. JULIA could be in GC offstage DR.*
DAVID *(He acknowledges the greeting. As London East End tailor)* Yes, all right, my son; enough already.
JANICE *(Principal enters carrying basket with gifts all wrapped)* Thank you all. Bit of shush, please. *(To DAVID)* Take a seat, kind sir.
DAVID *(Sitting, finger wave in admonition)* 'Brevity is the soul of wit, Mrs. Claypool'.
JANICE *(Addressing the staff)* Well now, what can one say about this extraordinary man? Some of us weren't even born when David started teaching.
DAVID *(Cupping ear speaks as frail old man)* Could you speak up please?
JANICE 'Salt of the earth', 'a born teacher' and 'generous to a fault' - these are just some of the sayings which happily apply to our terrific colleague. How many hundreds, no thousands of students have had their life enriched by this dedicated and amazing man?
DAVID *(Turning to imaginary colleague. Whispers)* Who's she talking about?
JANICE Today we read that teaching has changed, that the so-called best teachers should be paid more and that testing creates curriculum. But with change all around, one thing remains constant. Teaching is and always will be about skill and passion; skill in knowing how to guide and inspire students; and above all, passion for the profession and text. David Cadwallader is one of those wonderful, unsung teaching heroes with skill and passion to burn.
DAVID I'm not dead am I? *(Amusement)*
JANICE Anyone who can successfully introduce Shakespeare to generations of teenagers is a brilliant teacher. Anyone who can do that via the Marx Brothers is a genius.
DAVID *(As Groucho)* "I've had a perfectly wonderful farewell. But this wasn't it."
(JANICE and imaginary staff amused)

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- JANICE** (*Addressing him directly*) David, to say we're going to miss you is a serious understatement. We'll miss your irrepressible personality, your energy and enthusiasm, your passion for books, your infectious sense of lunatic humour and of course, your wonderful friendship and love.
- GREEK CHORUS** *Murmurs of support - hear, hear.*
- DAVID** You left out my 'modesty'. (*Laughter*)
- JANICE** (*Turning to her basket of goodies*) Now choosing a gift for the man who has everything was, believe me, one hell of a task. (*JANICE indicates gifts as she mentions each one*) But knowing your appreciation of fine wine, we're sure your palate will enjoy this fine drop of red.
- DAVID** (*As W.C. Fields*) "I cook with wine, sometimes I even add it to the food."
- JANICE** (*With an envelope*) And for that long-awaited trip, two double-passes for you and Judith to the Globe theatre in London and the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon.
- DAVID** (*Genuinely impressed, mouths*) Wow.
- JANICE** (*With another envelope*) Of course what else for the man who loves books, but a book voucher, and last but not least, (*Indicates gift*) a DVD collection of every Groucho Marx appearance in movies and on TV.
- DAVID** (*As Groucho but overcome*) "Anybody who doesn't like this book is healthy."
- JANICE** I speak for everyone, David, the teaching staff, the office staff, the cleaners and caretakers, the canteen staff, the parents and your many adoring students, when I say thank you for just being you. Our loss is Judith's gain and we wish you both a long and very happy retirement.
(*Basket with goodies handed to DAVID*)
- FX** *Applause or live from Greek Chorus*
(*JANICE applauds with the imaginary others and steps back allowing him to speak*)
- DAVID** (*Stands. Pause*) Crikey! (*Turns to JANICE. As Groucho*) "Do you think I could buy back my introduction to you?" (*Laughter. Another pause. As himself*) Well, thank you Janice for your very kind words. And thank you everyone for these superb gifts. (*He struggles with emotion*) I can't remember what I said at my last retirement speech. (*Amusement*) And I think it fair to say I have some mixed emotions. Forty odd years is a bloody long time to stand in front of a bunch of kids and wonder if World War Three will ever be over. (*Smiles*)
- I've seen a few changes since I started teaching. Dress code for staff has gone from formal to informal to 'I've just got out of bed'. (*Amusement*) The boss has gone from headmaster to principal to Human Resource Controller, and finally to today's Media and Marketing Manager. (*Amusement*)
- (*Serious for once*) Did you know there used to be a time when teachers were highly respected members of the community? It's true. Stationmasters and teachers were once pillars of society. Now the trains are stuffed and teachers are fulltime report writers.
- (*Back to his mischievous best*) Of course there are some things I'll never miss. 9E on a wet Friday afternoon - any Friday afternoon. Yard duty. Gary on Mondays if St Kilda fluked a win. (*Staff react*) Oh and so-called professional development sessions where we're asked, (*Whining voice*) "Why did you become a teacher?" (*This gets a laugh*)

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But there's one thing I *will* miss; big time. You. When Judith and I had that trouble with our son, *(Pause, softer)* still have, *(Bucks up)* your fantastic support kept us going. *(Looks around)* Thank you. I'll *always* remember that.
(Pause. DAVID is emotional and doesn't want to or can't say anything more)

FX

Applause

JANICE

(In close to DAVID) I'll see you before you go. (She squeezes his arm then exits) (DAVID collects his basket of gifts then turns one way then the other as imaginary colleagues come up and pat his arm, kiss his cheek, etc as they exit the staffroom. He nods and speaks to these colleagues. Once the chatting begins, lights begin to fade as music begins softly. The Greek Chorus staff members could each call out their best wishes)

DAVID

Thanks ... Great ... Good on ya, mate Thanks Shirl ... *(Laughing)* You're on ... Thanks buddy ... Cheers ...

BLACKOUT

FX

Brief musical interlude using a few bars of Elizabethan music (Lights up where the classroom was and it is now inside DAVID and JUDITH's home. DAVID waits upstage in the darkness. JUDITH is offstage on the phone. MUSIC FADES)

Act One - Scene Three

JUDITH

(Enters on phone) Yes, I know. I'll tell him. (Pause) Tonight. I'll tell him tonight.

FX

(DAVID'S car is heard)

JUDITH

That's him now. I'll call you later. Yes, all right, tonight. *(She exits)*

(She ends phone call, sighs and exits. Carrying presents, DAVID enters room)

DAVID

(Offloading gifts) Judith, I'm home. (He looks at gifts, smiles then he calls again) Judith?

JUDITH

(Enters) I heard you the first time.

DAVID

Got some great presents. It was the best final day I've ever had.

JUDITH

Sit down.

DAVID

Even Janice made a half-decent speech.

JUDITH

(Sits) I've got bad news.

(DAVID snaps out of his frivolous mood and is instantly deadly serious)

DAVID

(Sits) It's John, he's dead. Where is he?

JUDITH

I don't know.

DAVID

You don't know where he is or you don't know if he's dead? Come on, tell me, please.

JUDITH

David, we've talked about this a hundred times. John died the day he chose that lifestyle. And I've got nothing new about him *or* Rosie.

(Pause. This is not a happy home. DAVID back to trying to be normal)

DAVID

(Excited, refers to envelope) We got fantastic presents; tickets to the Globe and the RSC.

JUDITH

I told you, I'm not going.

DAVID

(Another instant mood switch, almost desperate) Oh but why?

JUDITH

You know why. It's over; *we're* over.

DAVID

(Doesn't want it to be over) Don't say that!

JUDITH

(Pause, softer) And you're not going either.

DAVID

I know I said mediation was a waste of time but now I'll give it a try. I'll try anything, Judith. I want our marriage, I want *us*, to survive. *(JUDITH won't meet his stare. She decided long ago it's over. She refuses to co-operate. Suddenly DAVID has twigged) 'I'm not going either?'*

JUDITH

That's the bad news.

DAVID

(Doesn't want to ask) It's mother.

JUDITH

It's Robert.

DAVID

Robert? What's happened?

JUDITH

He's been arrested.

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DAVID *(Shocked)* Arrested? For what?

JUDITH Fraud.

DAVID *(DAVID is stunned, shakes his head)* Fraud?

JUDITH *(She could touch his arm)* I'm sorry.

DAVID *(Full of dread)* No. *(Pause)* How much? *(JUDITH doesn't reply)* Not everything? *(JUDITH barely nods. Pause. DAVID runs fingers through his hair. He's in shock)* Are you sure? There might be some mistake.

JUDITH He rang from the police station.

DAVID *(Despair as the truth sinks in)* Oh god; why me?

JUDITH He took money from all his clients and set up some Ponzi scheme.

DAVID But he's family; he's my brother-in-law.

JUDITH I did warn you.

DAVID That's our entire super.

JUDITH *Your* entire super.

DAVID *(In shock)* Jesus, Judith. What are we going to do?

JUDITH What's this 'we' business?

DAVID But that was all the money I had. I started that private super fund years ago.

JUDITH I told you he stole from my mother. Why do you think she finished up in that urine-scented nursing home? He ruined her life and now he's ruined yours.

DAVID *(In shock)* "Neither a borrower nor a lender be."

JUDITH It's a bit late for poetry.

DAVID *(Trying to make sense of things)* I can't go back to teaching. I can't.

JUDITH Time for down-sizing, matey.

DAVID We could both go on the pension. You get more if you're a couple.

JUDITH *(Angry)* Will you stop this bloody acting. There's no more 'we'. Our marriage ended years ago and certainly once our loving children dumped us. Get real, David. It's over. *We're* over. *(Pause. She feels remorse. Softer)* I'm sorry about your money ... really ... I'm sorry. *(Another pause)* We'll have to sell the house.

DAVID *(Shakes head. It's all too much)* And go where?

JUDITH That's your choice. *(Pause)* I'll be living with someone else.

DAVID *(This is an even bigger bombshell. Is staggered)* What?

JUDITH Oh come on, you must have known.

DAVID Known what?

JUDITH Why are you doing this? Stop living in some parallel universe where everything and everyone is sweetness and light. We haven't shared a bed for years. We're a dysfunctional family and our imperfect marriage is dead. *(Pause. They go back to speaking softly. This conversation has been a long time coming and now it's here, both are unsure of how to behave)*

DAVID *(Softer, not looking at her)* What's his name?

JUDITH Don't go there.

DAVID So, after thirty-eight years of connubial bliss I'm being replaced by Mister Anonymous. I mean, does he actually exist?

JUDITH Let's talk money.

DAVID *(As Groucho)* "Man does not control his own fate. The women in his life do that for him."

JUDITH Always the bloody joker.

DAVID "Our revels now are ended."

JUDITH I suggest we sell the house unless you want to buy me out.

DAVID *(You're joking)* Buy you out? And you call *me* the joker. *(Takes money from pocket)* Right. How does ... three, five, twenty ... twenty-seven dollars and forty cents sound? *(She ignores him)* With a lawn-mowing round I could stretch to thirty.

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- JUDITH** I don't want to buy you out. I'm moving in with my partner.
DAVID Partner? Oh yes, Mister No Name. No, don't tell me, let me guess. He's a lawyer from Eltham called Sebastian. No? Ah, a retired stockbroker with a holiday shack in Portsea?
(These place names can be changed to suit the area in which the play is being performed)
- JUDITH** *(Rises, leaving)* Let me know when you've grown up.
DAVID *(Contrite)* Don't go, Judith, please, I'm sorry. Please. *(She stops)* I'll stop clowning around.
- JUDITH** *(Returns to chair)* The best thing, the *only* thing we can do now is work through the situation.
- DAVID** *(Nodding)* Okay.
JUDITH List what we have to do and make the split as smooth as possible. Yes?
DAVID *(Nodding, resigned to the truth)* Yes.
JUDITH So, we sell the house?
DAVID *(Nodding)* Yes.
JUDITH If there's any money left, we split it fifty-fifty.
DAVID *(Shocked)* If there's any money left?
JUDITH We don't own the house. *(Annoyed he's either forgotten or ignorant)* Oh come on, we did that deal with the bank to fund John's treatment. That rehab cost a fortune. *(DAVID stunned)* You've forgotten. God you're hopeless.
DAVID *(He'd forgotten or had blocked it out. Deadpan)* "Brother can you spare a dime?"
JUDITH We'll get a third of the sale price less what we owe.
DAVID *(Shocked)* A *third*?
JUDITH From that we pay off the personal loan Rosie abandoned, John's lawyer's bills and the money we owe my sister; remember?
DAVID *(Bewildered)* But ...
JUDITH What's left we split fifty-fifty. I won't quibble over the MG.
DAVID How kind.
JUDITH I suggest you talk to a lawyer and make sure you're not being cheated.
DAVID *(His first nasty remark)* Well your brother's screwed me over so why not you?
JUDITH *(Angry)* Now listen, matey, I repeatedly told you to not let Robert touch your money. You wouldn't listen. So don't hang that on me.
DAVID *(Knows she speaks the truth)* Sorry.
JUDITH Grow up, stop playing the martyr and bloody well move on. *(She exits)*
DAVID *(Alone)* "When sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions."
JUDITH *(Enters but stays at edge of room)* And there's an agent *(realtor)* coming to see the house at five. I suggest you tidy your room. *(Starts to exit)*
- DAVID** No, Judith, wait. *(She enters, he's struggling)* Where, where will I find a lawyer?
JUDITH Look under lawyers. *(She wants to depart but he persists)*
DAVID But wait, wait, please. *(She's impatient)* Can you recommend someone? Could *your* solicitor recommend someone?
JUDITH Hardly; there might be some conflict there.
DAVID Conflict?
JUDITH *(Exasperated, tells all)* My solicitor's my partner. We're moving in together.
DAVID Ah, "It adds a precious seeing to the eye". *(Weak joke, ever the jester)* So your mystery man is Stan the solicitor.
JUDITH *(Pause)* Actually it's Sue the solicitor.
DAVID *(Will DAVID explode? No, he turns joker)* Sue the solicitor. Oh that's brilliant. Fire the arsonist, tap the plumber and sue the solicitor. *(Sudden crash back to reality. He's pathetic. Pause)* Sue the solicitor? *(JUDITH nods)* It's not a boy called Sue?

Shakespeare in Saigon 12

JUDITH She's a she.
DAVID *(Pause)* I didn't see that coming.
JUDITH *(Kindness during the battle)* No need for salt in the wound.
DAVID *(Thinking aloud)* My wife left me for another woman.
JUDITH And yes, I *am* getting my divorce costs for free.
DAVID Oh. *(Puzzled)* Is that ethical? I mean, can't you get struck off for sleeping with your clients?
JUDITH We can do this the easy or the hard way.
DAVID I suppose a *ménage a trois* is out of the question? *(She gives him a look. He shrugs)* Worth a try.
(Pause. It's difficult for both of them but DAVID's the one who's received all the bad news)
DAVID I wonder what a woman feels like when hubby announces he's gay and moves in with his first best friend? I mean are the wife's feelings the same a husband has when his wife shacks up with a bird?
JUDITH There's one more bit of bad news.
DAVID *(Thinking)* Don't tell me. My doctor rang and I've got two weeks to live.
JUDITH *(Rising, preparing to exit)* Your mother's had a fall.
DAVID Well she can't be dead; you said it was *bad* news.
JUDITH She's in hospital, the number's by the phone. And sounding just like your mother, *(Imitating her mother-in-law)* 'tidy your room, David'. *(She exits)*
FX *Elizabethan music begins softly - it contains car sounds for next scene)*
(Lights narrow on DAVID. Sign placed DL)
DAVID "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries."

BLACKOUT

Act One - Scene Four

(DAVID steps into new position near sign where he is lit. An imaginary buyer enters)
DAVID Oh g'day. You've come about the car? Yeah, she's a beauty all right.
(DAVID follows the imaginary buyer who walks around the imaginary car)
Hop in. Make y'self at home.
(Invisible buyer sits in vehicle and DAVID chats)
FX *MG engine ticking over - continues*
DAVID She runs like a dream. *(Louder)* A dream. *(Sales pitch)* I had a major service only last month. New tyres last year. Oh and it's fantastically waterproof, especially when it rains. *(The buyer isn't amused)* Of course I'm absolutely gutted to sell her but needs must ... *(Shrugs)* She's been a joy for ...
FX *Kill car sounds*
DAVID *(Distressed)* How much? *(Pause)* But it's a classic. They're as rare as hen's teeth
(Pause. It's just another kick in the guts for DAVID who is already down. He nods. Softly)
Okay. Yes, okay. I accept.
FX *The car engine revs and the car drives away*

BLACKOUT

Act One - Scene Five

(DAVID moves to new position having collected a book. Music fades. Lights up. David has copy of play. It's Shakespeare's Lear. He reads although he knows the speeches by heart)

Shakespeare in Saigon 13

DAVID “You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need
And let not women’s weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man’s cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,
No, I’ll not weep.
I have full cause of weeping, but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
Or ere I’ll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!
(He closes book, looks to the heavens and declares)
“The wheel is come full circle, I am here.”

BLACKOUT

FX *Street noises - cars, people, etc*
(In the BLACKOUT, DAVID exits and adds scarf and cap and collects shopping bag with wine and cheese. He re-enters and is now in a street near his new flat)

Act One - Scene Six

(He and JUDITH have split, their house has been sold and DAVID is renting a one-bedroom flat in Footscray, a working-class suburb with a large Vietnamese population. He has just moved in and right now is heading home from a trip to the local licenced supermarket. It is late afternoon and he’s checking out his new locale and neighbours. This is a new adventure for him. With cap, scarf and shopping bag, he surveys the street outside his new home. Lighting comes up downstage only)

DAVID *(Thinking aloud, observing new surrounds)* “Expectation is the root of all heartache.” I shall prepare for disappointment, misery and woe. *(Sees imaginary person. Steps towards them)* A fellow traveller. *(Stops. Nods to imaginary person in street)* Good afternoon, friend. *(No response. Thinking aloud again)* How does one say ‘G’day’ in Vietnamese? *(Extends hand to another imaginary person in street)* Hello. “I do desire we may be better strangers.” *(No response. Thinking aloud)* I’m a stranger in a foreign land. *(Looking around)* I wonder if the RSC tour to Footscray. *(Tries one more time to strike up a conversation with an imaginary local)* Excuse me? I was wondering ... *(They speak in a language unknown to DAVID)* Sorry. Do you speak English? *(Pause)* Eng-lish? *(Another failed conversation)*

FX *(Fade street noises crossfade to become a musical interlude)*
(DAVID shakes head, faces front and speaks to the world) “Confusion now hath made his masterpiece.” *(Loud, frustrated)* Where the bloody hell am I?

BLACKOUT

Act One - Scene Seven

(In darkness he exits DR. Slowly lights come up on the whole stage for the first time. DAVID’s new home is seen. It is his rented furnished living-room with his personal belongings mainly books scattered about. He has a clock radio and a phone with answering-machine on the small table not far from the fridge. He unlocks door UR and enters)

FX *Music fades*
DAVID *(Once door opens)* Paradise! *(He enters, placing shopping beside/on settee and removing scarf and cap. He looks around)* “I like this place and willingly could waste my time in it.” *(Observing the decor)* Mind you I’m not so sure about the décor. As darling Oscar once said, “Either that wallpaper goes or I do.” *(He spies fridge)* Ah, vittles. *(He moves to and opens fridge. It is empty. As Groucho)* “Look at me. I’ve worked my way up from nothing to a state of extreme poverty.”

Shakespeare in Saigon 14

(Closes fridge. To shopping bag, removes items. Sits on settee placing items on coffee table)
Dear boy, one must have life's essentials. *(Removes a bottle of wine/vodka)* Alcohol ... *(French accent)* naturellement. Camembert ... *(French accent)* essentiel. *(Places cheese on table)* And of course ... *(Pats well-thumbed book on table)* The scribblings of one Will Shakespeare. *(He leans back, stretches out)* The winning trifecta, I want for nothing, my life complete.

FX

Knock on door

DAVID

(Groans, dismayed, calls) None today, thank you!

FX

Another knock on door

DAVID

"But hark, a voice." *(Sarcastically heading to door)* And I'm fresh out of smoked salmon sandwiches. *(Opens door)* Ah, "gentle adieus and greetings" first visitor. *(He addresses an unseen young Vietnamese man - played by unseen actor or THANH imitating a male - who is looking for a friend)*

YOUTH

Danny, có ở đây hay là Khong? *(Is Danny here?)*

DAVID

Pardon Monsieur.

YOUTH

Danny, no có ở đây hay là Khong? *((Is Danny here?))*

DAVID

Danny?

YOUTH

Danny.

DAVID

Sorry old chap but ... *(We hear fading footsteps as YOUTH departs. Calling)* Not a problem. *(American accent)* Now y'all have a nice day. *(Closes door, re-enters)* That went well. I wonder if Danny kept a stash. *(Sits, bored)* Am I too young to become a drug baron? *(This new life is not appealing)* Now what? *(Looks at watch, holds to ear to test that it's ticking)* How long till death?

(He wanders DC and peers out through an imaginary small window)

What is this style of architecture? Lego? One *(Mimes trying unsuccessfully to open window)* ... immovable window. *(Surveys the view. Speaks with distinctive voice until the final word which is flat nasal)* "This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land, Dear for her reputation through the world, Is now leased out, I die pronouncing it ..." Footscray.

(Waves to imaginary passers-by below, calls) Greetings fair neighbours. Welcome to my humble abode. *(Sings a la Noel Coward to locals)* "A room with a view and you, with no one to worry us, ..." *(Gets idea)* Of course. I'll create the *Noel Coward Appreciation Society*, West Footscray Branch; even a choral society. *(Sings a la Coward)* "Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun".

(Wanders to radio, speaking as he goes)

This is the life. Wine, cheese, Shakespeare and music; what more could a ragged idiot want? *(He switches on radio)*

FX

Musical interlude using Elizabethan music which later leads to snoring, car noises, telephone and phone message

DAVID

(Mock excitement) Culture. "If music be the food of love, play on."

(He picks up receiver and listens) And a dial tone. *(Pleased, replacing receiver)* Bliss.

(He moves to settee, opens bottle, pours a good measure)

"A man cannot make him laugh – but that's no marvel; he drinks no wine."

(He drinks then settles on settee, and makes a toast)

"Drink sir, is a great provoker of three things - nose painting, sleep and urine."

(He toasts, drinks, puts glass on table then leans back as lights fade)

BLACKOUT

(Now begins tableaux in which time passes)

Act One - Scene Eight

(It is some hours later, evening, dark outside. Lights come up which are the lights from the street outside. We can just make out DAVID asleep on the settee. His shoes are off, his hair messy, empty can on his chest and empty glass on the table. He's been asleep for an hour or so and the outside noises will eventually wake him. DAVID snores on the FX. MOTHER enters in darkness, sits on her phone table, picks up phone and holds to her ear)

FX *Continues - sudden loud noises of car horn, cars screeching, crowd noises, police siren*

DAVID *(Wakes up) What? What's happening? (Noises get louder) All right! I heard you the first time. (DAVID groans, sits up and empty can falls to the floor. He stands unsteadily) Where am I?*

FX *Phone rings - keeps ringing. Lights up on MOTHER*

DAVID *Fustilarian! (He starts to move and kicks the settee and stumbles) Ow! God's teeth! Yes I'm coming! (He heads towards door but stumbles again) Where's that bloody light switch? (He reaches light switch and turns it on. Lights come up. Phone is still ringing. His annoyance is building) Yea, "think upon patience".*

FX *Phone stops ringing and recorded message is heard*

FX *'This is David. I'm not here. Speak after the beep. Beep!'*
(The last word is his joke - he says a falsetto 'Beep' even though there's a phone beep to come)

DAVID *(Live) Wait for the beep, Mother. (At phone hits speaker phone button)*

FX *Beep*

MOTHER *(On telephone) David, are you there? It's your mother. (Pause) David?*

DAVID *(Disguises voice, smooth tones) Footscray Funerals - how may we assist you? (He pours himself another drink)*

MOTHER *Hello? David?*

DAVID *(Stops the game; now as himself, calling back to phone) Yes, Mother, I'm here.*

MOTHER *I didn't recognize your voice.*

DAVID *(He knows what she is about to say) Are you having a terrible night?*

MOTHER *I'm having a terrible night.*

DAVID *(Drinking) Do you think you're going to die?*

MOTHER *I think I'm going to die. (Pause) David?*

DAVID *Just push the emergency buzzer.*

MOTHER *And these new tablets are useless. (Pause) David?*

DAVID *(He doesn't listen to her either. Calls) How are the new tablets?*

MOTHER *You sound far away. Where are you?*

DAVID *I've moved Mother. Your impoverished firstborn is now living on the other side of the tracks.*

MOTHER *Why are you living in that suburb?*

DAVID *(Tidying up) I'm like Fred Astaire, starring in *The Gay Divorcee*.*

MOTHER *What did you say?*

DAVID *Just call me Wilkins Micawber.*

MOTHER *I can't believe you've lost all your money.*

DAVID *I'm busy, Mother. (Taking bottle/s to fridge/table then exits to bathroom)*

MOTHER *And your suburb is full of foreigners.*

DAVID *(Calling from offstage) Now don't be like that. Besides, there are advantages.*

MOTHER *"Birds of a feather" your father used to say. (Realises what he said) Advantages?*

DAVID *(Pokes head into room and speaks softly) You'll never visit.*

MOTHER *I need you to take me to the heart specialist next week.*

DAVID *(Enters room) Have to be by taxi, Mother. I've come down in the world.*

MOTHER *Your father would've taken me.*

DAVID *(Sotto voce) You'd've made him. (Louder) You could ask my darling brother.*

Shakespeare in Saigon 16

- MOTHER** Your brother has an enormously important job ...
(DAVID mimics her, speaking with her the standard reply)
- BOTH** ... and his children are going through a very difficult stage.
- DAVID** *(Moving to end conversation)* Must fly, Mother. I'm expecting some drug dealers.
- MOTHER** *(Shocked)* Did you say 'rug dealers'?
- DAVID** They're huge fans of Noel Coward.
- MOTHER** *(More shocked)* Noel Coward?
- DAVID** *(Hand raised to hit the "Off" button)* Bye Mother.
(Excellent timing. Just as DAVID is about to hit the OFF button the door-knocking erupts)
- FX** Loud knocking on door
(DAVID stops stopping the phone call and looks to door)
- MOTHER** What was that?
- DAVID** *(Groaning, heading to door, speaking to himself)* Another of Danny's friends.
- MOTHER** *(Even more anxious)* David? What's happening?
- FX** More loud knocking on door
- DAVID** *(Calling to door. Angry)* All right! Keep y'shirt on! *(Opens door and is shocked. Instantly DAVID yells in fright and falls back as THANH enters in great distress. Underlined dialogue is the English translation. The following dialogue may overlap)* Hey!
- THANH** Thua ong, ong noi cua toi bi binh nang lam.
Oh sir! Please help me. My grandfather is very sick.
- MOTHER** David! Who's that speaking?
- DAVID** *(To THANH. Annoyed)* Whoa! I can't understand. *(Slower)* Speak English.
- THANH** Ong noi cua toi co the sap chet
Ong lam on dien thoai cho xe ciu thuong
Lam on di ma.
He may be dying. *(Looking around and points to phone)* Please, sir, call an ambulance.
- MOTHER** That sounds like a foreign person.
- DAVID** *(To THANH)* Look, I don't speak Chinese.
- MOTHER** Chinese?
- DAVID** *(To phone)* Mother, shut up!
- MOTHER** *(Outraged)* Shut up?
- THANH** *(Clasping throat miming pain/dying)* Ong noi cua toi binh nang lam, ong dang dau.
He is in great pain. My grandfather is very sick.
(DAVID now speaks more slowly to THANH to try and help her understand)
- DAVID** *(Asin playing charades)* Okay, are you sick? *(Emphatic)* Do you want ambulance?
- THANH** Lam on nhanh len
Toi khong co biet so cap ciu la so may.
Please hurry. I do not know the emergency number.
- MOTHER** Yes! I want an ambulance.
- THANH** *(Taking handset and speaking to it)* Sinh loi co tinh hinh nay rat la nghiem trong.
Excuse me, madam, but we have an emergency.
- MOTHER** David!
(THANH hits receiver and MOTHER's call is ended. THANH hands phone to DAVID)
(LIGHTS down on MOTHER who remains seated)
- DAVID** *(Taking phone)* Do you mind? That was my mother.
- THANH** Lam on ma
Ong noi co the chet lien nay day.
Please, my grandfather may be dying.
- DAVID** *(Hitting emergency number)* And where's your phone? I see you young people yapping in your mobiles. *(To phone)* Yes, ambulance please. *(Pause. THANH runs outside to check on grandfather then returns)* I have an emergency with a woman who doesn't speak English. *(To THANH)* What are you? Chinese? Vietnamese?

Shakespeare in Saigon 17

- THANH** *(Nodding)* Vietnamese. Toi biet noi tieng Vietnamese.
Vietnamese. I can speak Vietnamese.
- DAVID** *(To phone)* Do you have someone who speaks Vietnamese? *(Pause)* I think a neighbour is ill but ... *(Hands phone to THANH)* ... Here, you tell them.
- THANH** *(Desperate to phone)* Da sinh chao,
Ong noi cua toi bi binh tim rat nang
Can phai cap ciu gap.
Hello. Please send an ambulance. My grandfather is very sick. *(Pause)* I think he's had a heart attack. *(Pause. Hands phone back to DAVID)*
- DAVID** Hello? *(Pause)* Yes, I think she lives next door. *(To THANH)* Where do you live?
(Slowly) What's your number?
(LIGHTS up on MOTHER who picks up phone and redials her son's number)
- THANH** Ong noi cua toi bi binh nang lam.
My grandfather is very sick.
- DAVID** Your flat number? *(THANH shakes head, raises hands. Frustrated, DAVID to phone)*
Look my address is Flat 15, 21 Hudson Street, Footscray. ... Yes, I'll be here.
(Hangs up then mocks himself) My social diary is currently free.
- FX** *Immediately phone rings. Continues*
- THANH** Ho co toi hay la khong
Ong lam on noi cho toi biet?
Are they coming? Please tell me.
- DAVID** *(Speaking slowly)* Right, ambulance is coming. *(Points to door)* You, go home.
(Slowly with signs) I *(Himself)* will listen *(ears)* for am-bu-lance.
(Makes siren sound and signals flashing lights)
- THANH** Bao lau thi se toi?
When will the ambulance be here?
- DAVID** *(Slowly)* I no understand. *(Gently indicating)* Go home. Ambulance coming.
(DAVID escorts THANH off-stage)
- FX** 'This is David. I'm not here. Speak after the beep. Beep!'
(DAVID re-enters)
- MOTHER** *(Upset - still)* David! You cut me off! David? *(DAVID moves to phone, hits hands-free)*
Hello!
- DAVID** I'm here, Mother. "All's well that ends well."
- THANH** *(Bursts in calling)* Nho noi ho di qua nha ke benh nhe? *(Exits just as quickly)*
Please make sure the ambulance comes next door!
- MOTHER** Who is that person?
- DAVID** What person? I'm all alone.
- MOTHER** You've got a woman. A foreign woman!
- DAVID** Relax, Mother. I'm fresh out of concubines.
- MOTHER** You've imported one of those mail-order brides.
- DAVID** *(Snaps)* Oh for god's sake, Mother. Some neighbour came in to use the phone.
She needs a bloody ambulance.
- MOTHER** I've warned you about foreigners.
- DAVID** And she sends her love to you too. Bye.
(DAVID hits machine and MOTHER'S LIGHTS are killed. She exits. DAVID lifts receiver from cradle and leaves it out meaning the line is engaged)
(Heading to kitchen) Coffee, my son; you need caffeine in your scotch.
(Kitchen sounds as DAVID potters offstage. Singing offstage a la Noel Coward)
"There are bad times just around the corner
There are dark clouds hurtling through the sky"
- FX** *Ambulance siren in distance.*

Shakespeare in Saigon 18

DAVID *(He enters surprised)* That was quick.
FX *Siren gets louder then stops.*
DAVID Must remember to have my heart attack on a Monday. *(At door, calling)* Up here; where the young lady is waving. *(Re-enters and is happy for once)* “How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world.”
(Heads to kitchen but stops and replaces phone in cradle anticipating an immediate ringing sound. Pause. Speaks to silent phone)
The line is free, Mother. Normal service has been resumed. *(Silence. Pause. Part sarcastic, part worried)* That’d be right. Now she really *does* need an ambulance.
(Heads to fridge)
“Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard
To get her poor dog a bone”
(Opens fridge and peers inside)
“Oft expectation fails”.
(Closes fridge. Spots food on table by settee)
(Heading to settee) Ah, wine and cheese, *(Italian accent)* vino and a cheddar.
(Sits on settee and begins to prepare his feast)
FX *Door knocking - not too loud*
DAVID *(Unhappy, groans)* What now?
(DAVID is about to stand but stops when THANH enters with bamboo type food container)
THANH Chao ong
Ong oi?
Ong co o do hay la khong.
Hello? Sir? *(Pause)* Hello?
DAVID *(Rises to greet his guest)* Oh, it’s you. *(Slowly)* Is everything hunky-dory?
THANH Ong co the cho toi noi chuyen voi ong hay la khong?
May I speak with you, please?
DAVID Well your relaxed demeanor would suggest a silver lining. So are there bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover? Was Dame Vera telling porkies?
(She approaches with deference)
THANH Toi chi muon bao cho ong biet rang ong noi cua toi khong co bi binh nang lam.
I wish to inform you that my grandfather is not seriously ill.
DAVID That *sounds* like good news.
THANH *(Indicating stomach)* Ong dao ruot thua.
He only has very bad indigestion.
DAVID I’d offer you some refreshment only it’s the maid’s night off. *(Pause)* I see you are admiring my humble abode. Did you know that slumming is the new black?
THANH *(Pause. Holds out food container)* Tang cho ong.
This is for you.
DAVID For me? *(She nods; he accepts food)* “I can no other answer make, but, thanks and thanks.” *(Sniffs food)* May one enquire as to the contents? It smells intriguing.
THANH Qua nho de cam on ong. *(She bows)*
It is a small gift to thank you for all your kindness.
DAVID But will it give me the runs? *(She looks at him)* You know, the trots? Diarrhea? Delhi belly? *(Embarrassed by her lack of English, she shakes her head as she has no idea. He holds up container)* Shitty shitty bang bang?
THANH Ong co thich do an cua Vietnam hay la khong?
Mon an nay rat la dat biet
Toi tu nau do.
Do you like Vietnamese food? This is a very special dish. I cooked it myself.

Shakespeare in Saigon 19

- DAVID** I've seen the many Asian shops around here. *(Pause)* I'm more familiar with Greek and Italian. *(Speaks with syllable emphasis)* Souv-la-ki. Car-bo-nar-a. *(Pause. Neither can understand the other. He places dish on table)*
- THANH** Toi sinh loi
Toi khong co biet noi tieng ... English.
I am sorry. I cannot speak ... English. *(One of the few English words she knows)*
(THANH saying 'English' triggers an enthusiastic response from DAVID. He is not sarcastic but rather relieved he can say what he feels)
- DAVID** *(Seizes on her last word)* English! Did you say, 'English'?
- THANH** *(Smiling and nodding)* Eng-lish.
- DAVID** But that's wonderful! I *know* that word! I can even spell it.
- THANH** *(Still smiling)* Eng-lish.
- DAVID** In fact, *(Looks around prior to telling a secret)* English literature and I or, should that be English Literature and me? - we've been having it off for years! We're pals, bosom-buddies, and "such is my love, to thee I so belong".
- THANH** *(Pleased he's pleased. Nodding but without understanding a word)* Dung roi English toi khong co biet tien anh English.
Chi hieu tien viet thoi Vietnamese.
Yes, English. I cannot speak English; only Vietnamese.
- DAVID** It's a glorious language, English; Chaucer, Dickens, *(Seizes/indicates WS tome)* Shakespeare. Have you read even a part of their oeuvre?
- THANH** Eng-lish.
- DAVID** Or maybe *(Sarcastic intent though not necessarily in delivery)* Jeffrey Archer, Dan Brown or Barbara Cartland? *(She nods not understanding a single word)* You should learn English; it's international. Even Americans speak a form of English. *(Smiling but with a smidgeon of annoyance)* And with English as your language, you could order an ambulance yourself and not have to interrupt the *(Tad nasty)* boring old fart next door.
(THANH nods and smiles. She has no idea what is being said and decides to leave)
- THANH** *(Bowling)* Cam on ong
Toi phai ve voi ong ba noi cua toi.
Thank you, sir. I must return to my grandparents.
- DAVID** But you can't leave now. *(Imitates her bowing)* We have something in common. We both know the word 'English'.
- THANH** Sing chao. [Goodbye] *(THANH exits)*
- DAVID** *(Waves)* It was lovely to meet you. *(Goes to door and calls)* And thank y'mother for the rabbits. *(Closes door, sighs, returns to settee, reflects)* That went well, Dave. *(Sarcastic)* First spot of social intercourse in the new locale and your old chat-up charm is alive and well. *(Self-critical)* Not.
(Sits and reflects. Enjoys drink. Investigates food package)
So what have we got here?
(He removes lid, peers into container, dips a finger in then places finger in mouth. He likes it)
Hmmm. "Tis an ill cook that cannot lick his own fingers."
(He takes portion of THANH's food and eats)
- FX** *Musical interlude featuring Elizabethan music begins softly*
- DAVID** *(With food in mouth and enjoying it)* I tell you what, you've done all right here, my son. *(Mouth full)* Bloody good grub.
(He continues eating, music swells, lights fade)

BLACKOUT

(MUSIC continues. DAVID exits to make simple costume change)

Act One - Scene Nine

- FX** *Fade music when ready*
(Lights up. It's morning the next day. He hasn't changed because he wouldn't anyway. He might have his shirt hanging out and some buttons undone. He could lose his cardigan. His hair is more messy than last night. He enters from bathroom wiping his face. The food, drink and containers are where he left them last night. He declaims as he enters)
- DAVID** "Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye ..."
(At table where he hits answering machine)
- FX** *Recorded message, possibly American accent. "You have no new messages"*
- DAVID** *(Heads to settee, referring to person 'in' machine)* Thanks for that, chummy. *(Surveying scene on table)* Now, breakfast. *(He pours glass of grog and using fingers takes food from THANH's container)* Nothing like hair of the dog and leftovers.
(He sits, eats and drinks and ponders his next move)
Right then, what's on for the rest of my life? I could take up sitting in parks ... or pass wind professionally. I could join the self-pity society. "The miserable have no other medicine. But only hope."
(With glass or cup in hand he wanders to imaginary window)
And what of the world beyond? *(He surveys the street below)* You're spot on about the natives, Mother. *(Toasts imaginary person in street below)* Good morning. *(Sips)*
Not an abundance of Anglo-Saxons. *(He looks at the world outside)*
"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages."
(He despairs. His life is now pointless)
- But what can I do in this my seventh age? *(He's struggling for a vehicle, a task, a job, an idea)* Race snails. Cultivate nasal hair. Worship wrinkles.
- (Heads back to bottle)* I could deliver meals on wheels and pinch the puddings.
(Tops up drink, toasts) I could join Alcoholics Anonymous.
(Drinks. Gets idea, Slams hand on table)
- Of course! Teach! *(Gets excited)* "Do what you do do well, boy"; a new take on an old job. But teach what? *(Inspiration)* English! Basic English! Half the locals don't know their subject from their predicate.
- (Looks around)* I can teach in here. Cash in hand. *(Sense of excitement)* Suddenly a purpose, a reason to exist. "Simply the thing that I am shall make me live."*(Raises glass)* To my *English Language School*. *(He drinks)*
- (To paper and pencil/pen at table by phone)* Come on, come on; planning. "Early to bed, early to rise, it's no jolly good if you don't advertise." *(Speaks as he writes)* *Learn English. Experienced teacher. Cheap ... No. (Crosses out the word)* *Reasonable rates. Contact ... blah, blah, blah ...*

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(Stops writing, annoyed, throws down pencil) Oh pignut! They can't read an ad in English. It has to be in *Vietnamese*. *(Pause. Tries to solve problem)* Don't panic, Dave. Find a translator. *(Thinks)* The library. No. *(Gets up thinking)* I need to fly under the radar; strictly black market.

(Wanders DC back to imaginary window) Word of mouth advertising; start small, infiltrate the locals. What about Miss Ambulance from next door? She owes me. *(Suddenly sees THANH outside)* And there she is! *(Taps on imaginary window, waves and calls in normal volume, even miming, but with exaggerated mouthing)* Hey! Hey you! Oi! Hell-o. *(She looks up, he nods, excited)* Yes you! Yes! *(She sees him. He beckons)* Come here.

(More beckoning. Speaking slowly mouthing, speaking with normal volume as the window is stuck fast) Come here. I ...speak ... to ... you. *(Pause. She moves to his flat)* Yes! *(Afterthought)* And hurry! *(Heads towards front door)* Go, Dave, "action is eloquence". *(Suddenly changes direction and moves to bathroom)* Appearances dear boy, appearances. *(Offstage he spruces up his appearance. He sings)* "There'll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover."

FX Knock on door

(DAVID re-enters smoothing/combing his hair)

DAVID *(Dramatic)* "It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves."

(He heads to door but could stop to straighten picture on wall or check his face in mirror)

And now for the Cadwallader charm. *(Full of charm, opening door)* "A hundred thousand welcomes," dear maiden fair.

THANH *(Enters nervously)* Chao ong

Toi thay ong vay tay toi.

Hello, sir. I think I saw you waving.

DAVID *(Following TRANH inside)* "A general welcome from his grace salutes ye all."

(Indicates settee) Pray be seated. *(She is not sure)* "Sit worthy friends." *(Encourages her)*

Go on, take a pew. *(She smiles then moves to armchair and sits. THANH is concerned but not frightened. What is going on?)* Now, may I begin by expressing my sincere thanks for your splendid repast. It was delicious.

THANH Ong noi dang nghi

Cam on ong da giup toi hom qua.

My grandfather is resting. Thank you again for helping me yesterday.

DAVID *(Of course does not understand her comments)* But, dear lady, I have a problem arising from the following situation. *(Slowly)* I speak English; you speak Vietnamese.

THANH *(Nodding)* Vietnamese.

DAVID I plan to offer my services as a teacher. Here in my humble des res, I will impart the skill of a second language to anyone who is Vietnamese.

THANH *(Nodding)* Vietnamese.

DAVID Which is why I beg from you a favour, dear damsel, asking that you inform your family, friends and neighbours of this new and wonderful service teaching the basics of English.

THANH *(Happy to say the one word she understood)* Eng-lish.

DAVID Oh I'm so sorry. I haven't introduced myself. My name is David. And you are?

(THANH understands nothing. Pause. DAVID indicates himself) Right. Me, David ... sir.

(Indicates THANH) You? You?

THANH Vietnamese.

DAVID *(Smiling)* Yes, I'm fine with geography; it's your moniker I seek. Let's see ... *(Looks around, fetches photo in frame, shows it)* Look, this is me, David. There. Da-vid.

THANH *(Uncertain)* Da-vid.

- DAVID** Excellent. You're making splendid progress. So ... *(Indicates himself as person)* Me, David. *(Points to her)* You?
- THANH** *(Pause then smiling, still not sure)* Vietnamese.
- DAVID** No, no. *(Indicates himself as person)* Me, David ... *(Points to her)* You?
- THANH** *(Twig, smiles)* Ah, *(Indicates herself)* Thanh.
- DAVID** *(Delighted)* Thanh? *(Offers hand and they shake)* Hello Thanh.
- THANH** Hello Thanh.
- DAVID** No, you ... *(Starts again. Indicating himself)* Me David, *(Indicating her)* you Thanh.
- THANH** *(Thinks she is meant to copy and points at him)* Me David, *(Points at herself)* you Thanh.
- DAVID** *(Containing frustration)* No, no. I am David. Me. *(Points to himself)* Da-vid. *(Points again to himself)*
- THANH** Da-vid.
- DAVID** Yes, yes. *(He points to himself)* Da-vid. *(Points at THANH)* You?
- THANH** *(Pause then she understands)* Ah, Thanh.
- DAVID** *(Relieved and quite excited)* Yes. "Heaven sent thee good fortune." *(Points at himself)* Now, speak.
- THANH** Da-vid. *(DAVID points at THANH)* Thanh. *(DAVID points at himself)* Da-vid. *(DAVID points at THANH)* Thanh. *(DAVID points at himself)* Da-vid. *(DAVID plays a trick. He starts to point at THANH but quickly points back to himself)* Thanh. *(THANH laughs)*
- DAVID** *(Still indicating himself)* No.
- THANH** *(Pointing at him)* Da-vid. *(Pointing at herself)* Thanh. *(It's touching and a fun moment but he wants to move on)*
- DAVID** Excellent. "Men of few words are the best men." *(Changes tack, speaking slowly)* So, Thanh, I wish to teach English to local Vietnamese people and I desire that you, please, should tell the locals. Vietnamese learn English. Understand?
- THANH** *(She looks at him then indicates herself)* Vietnamese. *(She indicates DAVID)* English.
- DAVID** *(He is patient)* Right. Let's try another tack. *(Looks at her and smiles)* I will teach you some words of English.
- THANH** *(Nodding)* Eng-lish.
- DAVID** Then you can tell your friends I'm brilliant. What say ye, Thanh?
- THANH** *(Nodding and pointing to him)* Da-vid. *(Pointing to herself)* Thanh.
- DAVID** *(Catches her smile and applauds)* Bravo. "Knowledge is the wing wherewith we fly to heaven." Now ... *(He decides to make a confession)* Actually I should begin with a confession. My teaching experience is more with English literature. Will that, do you think, be a problem?
- THANH** *(Pause. Still has no idea what he is saying)* Thanh, Vietnamese.
- DAVID** With English Lit I'm a seasoned professional but alas in the 'how now brown cow' department, my experience and skills could best be described as, 'not a sausage'.
- THANH** *(Wants to learn)* Saus-age.
- DAVID** *(Wondering how to begin)* So, my kingdom for an idea *(Launches into the first lesson, flying by seat of his pants. Looking around sees his hand)* Ah! *(Wiggles hand)* Hand. *(Pause. Keeps wiggling hand)* Hand.
- THANH** *(Gets the hang of it and mimics his wiggling hand)* Hand. *(DAVID is making things up as he goes along)*
- DAVID** Very good. But there's no need to wave. Now, ... *(Indicates nose)* nose.
- THANH** *(Indicates her nose)* Nose.
- DAVID** *(He smiles and nods. This is going well)* Well done. *(Indicates his ear)* Ear.
- THANH** *(She copies his action)* Ear.
- DAVID** *(Looking around then pats settee)* Sett-ee.
- THANH** *(Pats settee)* Sett-ee.

- DAVID** Um, (*Moves to imaginary window, indicates*) win-dow. (*THANH stands to move but is stopped*) No, stay there. Sit. (*Like a dog trainer*) Sit. (*She sits. He indicates*) Win-dow.
- THANH** (*She indicates from afar*) Win-dow.
- DAVID** (*Looking, heads to table*) And ... (*Indicates table*) Ta-ble.
- THANH** Ta-ble.
- DAVID** (*Indicates telephone*) Tel-e-phone.
- THANH** Tel-e-phone.
- DAVID** (*Indicates chair*) Chair.
- THANH** (*She mispronounces the word*) Care.
- DAVID** No, chair - (*Makes 'ch' sound*) ch, ch.
- THANH** (*Cannot get pronunciation right*) No, care - (*Makes 'c' as in 'car' sound*) c, c.
- DAVID** (*Smiles*) Almost. Now, (*He sits on chair*) 'I sit on the chair'.
- THANH** 'I sit on the care'.
- DAVID** Chair.
- THANH** (*Slowly*) Ch ...air.
- DAVID** Well done. (*Sees cup with pencils, picks up pencil*) Pen-cil.
- THANH** Pen-cil.
- DAVID** (*Picks up another pencil*) Two pen-cils.
- THANH** Two pen-cils.
- DAVID** (*Adds a third pencil*) Three pen-cils.
- THANH** Tree (*sic*) pen-cils.
- DAVID** No three.
- THANH** No tree (*sic*).
- DAVID** (*Remembers rhyme*) "When I say 'three', my tongue pops out. (*Pokes out tongue*) This thing, (*Pokes out tongue*) That thing."
- THANH** When I say tree (*sic*), my tongue (*sic*) pop out. (*Pokes out tongue*) Dis ting, (*Pokes out tongue*) dat ting'. (*Pokes tongue straight at him*)
(*Pause then DAVID puts tips of each thumb on his temples, wiggles his fingers and pokes out his wiggling tongue. Pause. THANH mimics him then DAVID laughs and THANH catches the moment and laughs too. It's a break-the-ice-moment, some chemistry between the two*)
- DAVID** (*Picks up phone*) I talk on the tel-e-phone.
- THANH** (*Putting hand to ear*) I talk on the tel-e-phone.
(*DAVID replaces phone and moves upstage indicating bookshelf and books*)
- DAVID** I have books in my book-shelf.
- THANH** I have books in my book-shell. (*sic*)
- DAVID** (*Looking around, taps book on coffee-table*) This is a book.
- THANH** (*Taps book on coffee-table*) Dis is a book.
- DAVID** (*Looks at book then taps cover*) Written by Will-iam Shake-speare.
- THANH** Witten (*sic*) by Will-iam (*Next bit is too hard*)
- DAVID** Shake-speare.
- THANH** Shak-es-peare.
(*DAVID is genuinely pleased. He gets carried away. His passion for Shakespeare shows*)
- DAVID** Brilliant, Thanh, we'll make a scholar of you yet. "Boldness be my friend."
(*He's thinking*) So, what next?
- THANH** (*He's thinking then she repeats his quote*) "Boldness be my friend."
- DAVID** (*Her mimicry inspires him*) Of course, the Bard himself. (*Dramatic hand gesture, dramatic voice*) "To be or not to be."
- THANH** (*Copies hand gesture and voice intonation*) "To be or not to be."
- DAVID** "I will wear my heart upon my sleeve."
- THANH** "I will wear my heart upon my scheve." (*sic*)
- DAVID** No, (*Tugging his sleeve*) sleeve, sleeve.

THANH *(Mimics his actions and voice pattern)* No, sleeve, sleeve.
DAVID “Be not afraid of greatness.”
THANH “Be not afraid of greatness.”
(Now begins a slow crescendo of hidden meaning)
DAVID “Speak low if you speak love.”
THANH *(She’s improving)* “Speak low if you speak love.”
DAVID *(He moves a little closer)* “Pleasure and action make the hours seem short.”
THANH “Pleasure and action make the hours seem short.”
DAVID *(Holds out hand but not too close. Poetic)* “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”
THANH *(Returns his gaze and gesture but if course has no idea what she is saying)* “Shall I compare bee *(sic)* to a summer’s day?” *(She is interrupted by an enthralled DAVID)*
(DAVID is lost in the beauty of the language, the thrill of teaching again and perhaps the charms of his visitor. He interrupts before she can finish)
DAVID “Thou art more lovely and more temperate.”
THANH “Thou art more ...”
DAVID *(He suddenly backs off, snaps out of his ‘game’, resumes his previous behaviour and ends the lesson)* Right, here endeth the lesson. *(THANH is confused)* Fin-ish, Thanh.
THANH *(Confused)* Fin-ish, Thanh.
DAVID No more. *(THANH confused. Slowly)* We stop. Con-clus-ion. Fi-ni-to. The end.
(Indicates she should stand)
THANH *(Standing)* The end.
DAVID *(Indicating watch)* To-morr-ow. *(Pointing to her)* Thanh, you come *(Indicates room)* here. *(Indicates watch and speaking slowly)* To-morr-ow. Next day. Un-der-stand?
THANH *(Nodding. She obviously doesn’t understand. Mimics his pronunciation)* Un-der-stand?
DAVID You have done exceedingly well. *(Indicating door, ushering her out)* See ... you ... la-ter. *(Waving)* Bye!
THANH *(Rises, heading to door)* See ... you ... la-ter. *(Waving)* Bye!
DAVID *(Loud)* No, wait! *(She is startled, stops, worried. DAVID gives a broad sweeping bow)* “Parting is such sweet sorrow,” fair maiden.
FX *Elizabethan music begins softly*
THANH *(Imitates bow)* “Parting is such sweet sorrow, fair maiden.”
(She bows, waves and exits)
DAVID *(Shaking his head – what has he done? But is delighted with the experience)* “’Tis not enough to help the feeble up, but to support them after.” “Listen to many, speak to a few.”
(MUSIC swells and LIGHTS fade. DAVID rubs his hands, laughs with pleasure for the first time in ages, clenches his fists with delight as in victory)
Yes!

BLACKOUT

Act One - Scene Ten

FX *Music continues in Blackout for 10-15 seconds*
(MOTHER enters in Blackout. She sits and puts phone to her ear. It is now 24 hours later. DAVID changes shirt or adds or removes cardigan/jacket or tucks in shirt. THANH changes headband and/or shirt. LIGHTS up with DAVID in bathroom having conversation with his MOTHER via the speaker phone. Having started the call, he’s retired to ablute and is offstage. MUSIC fades)
DAVID *(Calls to his mother)* I’m busy, Mother.
MOTHER I’ve telephoned the doctor. God knows when he’ll arrive. I’m quite sure I’m dying.
DAVID *(Is getting changed and not listening to her)* Good. *(Meaning nothing sinister)*

MOTHER What did you say?
DAVID Now about next Tuesday, Mother. I may have to change the time.
MOTHER You can't. You promised. It's in my diary.
DAVID *(Enters finishing dressing/combing hair. He tidies room)* Don't panic. I'll be there. It's just that I may have some good news.
MOTHER What? You never have good news. You take after me - permanently miserable.
DAVID I've gone back to teaching.
MOTHER Oh you stupid man. You're too old. You're on the pension.
DAVID *(Could be quite close to her as he tidies flat)* I agree, the idea is a little radical.
MOTHER Radical? It's preposterous.
DAVID I'm teaching Shakespeare to people who can't speak English.
MOTHER Your father was insane.
DAVID I'm sure some university offers a degree in the subject.
MOTHER Will you ever grow up? And are you rid of that foreign woman?
FX *Knocking on door*
DAVID *(Moves to phone, almost excited)* Must dash, Mother. Opportunity knocks.
MOTHER Who?
DAVID Bye. *(Hits button, Lights off on MOTHER who exits. DAVID moves toward front door, proclaims)* Enter. *(Pause)*
FX *More door knocking*
DAVID *(Louder)* Come in. *(Pause. Door opens and THANH enters with small container)* "Mistress, what cheer?"
THANH *(Nervous, unsure. She bows and indicates him)* Da-vid. *(Indicates herself)* Thanh.
DAVID No, no, no. You say, "Good morrow, sweet lord!" and then you curtsy, like this. *(He demonstrates a curtsy. Pause)* I'll show you. Come here. *(He escorts her into the room and, facing front, demonstrates the routine)* "Good morrow, sweet lord" and then you *(Curtsies again)* curtsy. *(Turns head back to her)* Got that? *(He moves to one side and she prepares to start)* Wait, wait! *(Pause. Announces)* Enter.
THANH *(Pause. She steps forward)* "Good morrow, sweet lord" and then you *(She curtsies)* curtsy. *(Turns head back to nobody)* Got that?
DAVID *(Amused)* Yes, all right. *(He indicates armchair)* Come dear lady, be thou seated. *(She has no idea. He points at armchair)* There, Thanh, sit! *(She sits while he stands to one side near C)*
Now, "conversation should be pleasant without scurrility ..." *(Suddenly THANH stands)* Hang on, I haven't finished.
THANH *(Offers food container)* Chao ong
Day la mot mon anh qui cua Vietnam.
Excuse me, sir. This is another traditional dish from Vietnam.
DAVID *(Accepts food)* More food? How kind. I must say I found your previous offering quite delicious. *(Takes food to kitchen)* And pray, what is this comestible called?
THANH *(Pause. Indicates container)* Shitty shitty bang bang.
DAVID *(He turns. She smiles and he smiles)* Jokes already; I'm impressed. Now, "once more unto the breach dear" Thanh. *(He points to chair)* Sit. *(She sits)* Right, my name is *(Points to himself)*
THANH My name is
DAVID *(Shaking head)* No. *(Points to himself)*
THANH Da-vid.
DAVID *(Nods)* Yes. *(Pointing to her)* And?
THANH Thanh.
DAVID Yes. So my name is David and ... *(Indicates her)*
THANH *(She's smart and has had a chance to think about things)* My name is Thanh.

- DAVID** (*Applauding*) Excellent. And again. My name is David and ...
- THANH** My name is Thanh.
- DAVID** Brilliant. (*But now we move on*) Now, moving on. (*Indicates hand*) What is this?
- THANH** Hand.
- DAVID** And? (*Points to nose*)
- THANH** Nose. (*He points to ear*) Ear. (*He points to window*) Sett-ee. (*Corrects herself*) Win-dow.
- DAVID** Good ... and self-correction. (*Points to/indicates table*)
- THANH** Table.
- DAVID** And (*Indicates telephone*)
- THANH** Tel-e-phone.
- DAVID** Well done. (*He sits on chair*) Now, I am sitting somewhere.
- THANH** I sit on the ... (*Struggles for correct pronunciation*) ch ... air.
- DAVID** Superb. (*Moves to table. Indicates book*)
- THANH** Book.
- DAVID** (*He's pleased with her skill and learning*) Yes, perfection. Thanh, you have done extremely well. I am delighted with ...
- THANH** (*She taps cover*) William Shak-es-peare.
- DAVID** (*Delighted*) Indeed. "We know what we are, but know not what we may be."
(*He moves to table for pencil and has his back to her. She decides to volunteer her learning*)
- THANH** (*Doesn't miss a beat. The speech should increase slowly in tempo and volume. The mistakes are deliberate*) "To be or not to be." "I will wear my heart upon my sleeve." (*DAVID turns and is hooked*) "Be not afraid of greatness." (*She is concentrating hard*) "Speak love if you speak low." No. "Speak low if you speak love." (*She's struggling. DAVID transfixed*) "Pleasure and action make the summer." (*sic*) "Shall I compare bee (*sic*) to a temperate (*sic*) day?" "Dow (*sic*) art more lovely."
- DAVID** (*Stunned but excited, applauding*) Puking lout! (*She has no idea*) Your first English sentences are straight from the Bard.
- THANH** (*Blindly and proudly copies*) The Bard.
- DAVID** (*Excited*) The swan of Avon; the greatest playwright ever; William Shakespeare!
- THANH** (*Smiles, taps cover*) Will-iam Shak-es-peare.
- DAVID** (*Thrilled*) William Bloody Shakespeare.
- THANH** (*Catching his delight*) William Bloody Shak-es-peare.
- DAVID** (*Laughing*) And you're a parrot.
- THANH** (*Nodding, smiles, copies him exactly*) And you're a parrot.
- DAVID** (*Smiles*) Y'know I've taught Shakespeare to thousands, well I tried to, but never have I seen such enthusiasm for the good old Tudor talkfest.
- THANH** (*Smiles*) Talk-fest.
- DAVID** (*The penny drops, thinking aloud, excitement builds*) Of course, (*louder*) of course; Elizabethan English. Saigon and Windsor. I know the lingo, (*Indicates THANH*) have guinea-pig, will teach. (*To her directly*) Tell me, Thanh, do you fancy a bit of the Bard? Will-iam Shake-speare?
- THANH** (*Nodding, smiling*) Will-iam Shak-es-peare.
- DAVID** (*Thinking aloud*) The seventh age, my new life; ageing guru stars in multicultural miracle. (*Mimics headline*) 'Boat people fluent in Shakespeare.' (*Back to her*) Thanh, we'll be the talk of the nation and Foot-is-cray.
- THANH** Foot-is-cray.
- DAVID** People will stop you in the street. "Do you not know that I am a woman? When I think, I must speak."
- THANH** (*Mimics him*) "I must speak."
- DAVID** Elizabethan English declaimed by a woman from Vietnam.

THANH (*Nodding, smiling, impressed*) Vietnam. (*She might briefly applaud*)
DAVID We'll hear *forsooth, verily* and *skimble-skamble*.
(*Definitions - in truth, indeed/in fact, rambling nonsense*)
THANH (*She's excited to speak rambling nonsense*) Skimble-skamble.
DAVID So what say ye, O Mistress mine?
THANH Toi rat la hen hanh vi ong la thay giao cua toi va
Toi cung rat la vui long duoc ong nhan toi la hoc cho.
I am very happy to study English with such a great teacher as you, sir.
DAVID (*Hasn't a clue*) Really Thanh?
THANH (*The same intonation*) Really David?
(*Pause. He smiles. She smiles*)
DAVID (*Leaning towards her*) "When words are scarce they are seldom spent in vain."
(*Launches his plan and keeps it moving*) Right, mistress, say after me. (*Looking around*)
Ah ... (*Pointing to his shoes*) Shoon.
THANH (*Pointing to her shoes*) Shoon.
DAVID (*Indicating his trousers*) Strossers.
THANH (*Tugs her trousers*) Strossers.
DAVID (*Pats leg, raises a leg*) Forks.
THANH (*Indicating her legs*) Forks.
DAVID (*Indicates his throat*) Ruffs.
THANH (*Indicates her throat*) Ruffs.
DAVID (*Indicates his wrist*) Cuffs.
THANH (*Indicates her wrist*) Cuffs.
DAVID (*Indicates his waist*) Hoops. (*As worn by ladies*)
THANH (*Indicates her waist*) Hoops.
DAVID (*Indicates his lips, puckers*) Sweet friends.
THANH (*Indicates her lips, puckers*) Sweet friends.
DAVID (*Patting his plump belly*) Fulsome.
THANH (*Patting her stomach*) Fulsome.
DAVID (*Indicates his crotch*) Codpiece.
(*A pouch at crotch of the tight-fitting breeches worn by men in the 15th and 16th centuries*)
THANH (*Without missing a beat, innocent however*) Codpiece.
FX *Elizabethan music begins softly*
DAVID (*Clearing a space or drawing THANH onto the stage within his flat*) "Come again, good
Kate ...we will have rings and things and fine array."
THANH (*Delighted, joining in*) William Shak-es-peare.
DAVID I am thy lord and thou art my mistress. (*Points to himself*) My lord.
THANH (*Points to him*) My lord.
DAVID (*Points to her*) Mistress.
THANH (*Points to herself*) Mistress.
DAVID (*This becomes a game*) "Women speak two languages - one of which is verbal."
THANH "Women speak two languages - one of which is herbal." (*sic*)
DAVID Verbal.
THANH Fur ball. (*sic*)
DAVID "Kindness in women shall win my love."
THANH "Kindness in women shall win my dove." (*sic*)
DAVID Love.
THANH Love.
(*Music begins a crescendo, dialogue rises with it, lights brighten*)
DAVID "She is a woman, therefore to be won."
THANH "She is a woman, therefore to be won."

DAVID “The sight of lovers feedeth those in love.”
THANH “The sight of lovers feedeth those in dove.” *(sic)*
DAVID Love.
THANH Love.
(Volume of music, brightness of lighting and dialogue continue to rise/increase)
DAVID “I bear a charmed life.”
THANH “I bear a charmed life.”
DAVID “You have witchcraft in your lips.”
THANH “You have witchcraft in your lips.”
DAVID *(Loud)* And “All the world’s a stage.” *(Stamps foot and extends arms)*
THANH *(Loud)* And “All the world’s a stage.” *(Stamps foot and extends arms)*

BLACKOUT

(Actors exit but music swells and continues)

Act One - Scene Eleven

DAVID *(The next day. DAVID abluting in bathroom. He sings/gargles - simultaneously?)*
(Sings) Someday I'll find you, moonlight behind you
True to the dream I am ... (Gargles the melody)
(Enters in good mood and tidies flat in preparation for the next lesson)
As I draw near you, you'll smile a little smile,
FX *Door knock*
DAVID *(Calling but keeps tidying) Enter. (Resumes singing) For a little while ...*
(No response. Moves out of bathroom and faces front door. Clears throat)
Enter. (Still nothing. Gestures as he speaks) Come oh mistress mine.
(Next bit of business happens quickly. He spots rubbish under table)
Oh gawd.
(He bends to use brush and pan and has his back/backside to the door with posterior raised.
JUDITH enters with briefcase or satchel. She pauses UC. He thinks THANH has entered)
“How now, good woman; how dost thou?”
JUDITH Dust? I never dust.
(DAVID freezes and speaks without turning)
DAVID I know that voice.
JUDITH *(Looking at his bottom)* I know those cheeks.
DAVID *(Deposits brush and pan, rises, turns)* Judith.
JUDITH You’ve remembered.
DAVID Long time no argue.
JUDITH Front door unlocked? *(Twigs, raises finger)* Gotcha ... handy for the mistress.
DAVID *(Suddenly worried)* What’s happened? Is it John? The grandkids? What?
JUDITH *(Moving in, sitting)* Don’t panic; I’ve no news of our dysfunctional family. This is strictly business. *(Retrieving papers)* There are divorce papers you need to sign.
DAVID *(Recovering—as Groucho)* “Whatever it is, I’m against it.”
JUDITH If I post them you’ll procrastinate. This way you can have y’freedom and get serious with your ‘mistress mine’. *(Looking around)* So, where’s she hiding?
DAVID The papers.
JUDITH *(She hands him papers)* Put your mark by the X—three times.
(DAVID takes papers, feels pockets for pen. She offers pen which he takes. He moves to kitchen and sits to read documents)
DAVID Beautifully prepared documents. The work of Sue the solicitor?
JUDITH Get on with it.
DAVID *(More reading. As Groucho)* “A child of five could understand this. *(Looks at her)* Send someone to fetch a child of five.”

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- JUDITH** *(Impatient)* Just sign.
(Silence as he signs three different pages. He smiles, stands and hands her the papers) And the pen. *(He hands back her pen)*
- DAVID** So, Tea? Coffee? Rat poison?
- JUDITH** *(Looking around)* I'm pleasantly surprised at your housekeeping.
- DAVID** You're too kind.
- JUDITH** And doubly impressed you've found a woman to do for you.
- DAVID** I was going to say 'find your own woman' but I'm reliably informed that's already in hand—or hands.
- JUDITH** *(She stands preparing to leave)* The curiosity's killing me. What's she look like?
(Starts to exit, calling) Send me a photo.
- FX** *Door knocking*
- JUDITH** *(Stops)* Ah, the mysterious maiden appears. I get to take a peek. *(Pretends to be shocked)* Don't tell me—she's a mail-order bride!
(JUDITH heads to door. DAVID is worried without showing much. Will he be humiliated? He turns away from door as JUDITH opens it) Bloody hell!
(DAVID is surprised when JANICE and JULIET enter) Talk about old home week. *(The visitors are surprised at seeing JUDITH but delighted at seeing DAVID)*
- JANICE** *(Has basket of goodies and politely embraces DAVID)* David.
- DAVID** *(Puzzled yet friendly)* "Good dawning to thee, friend." *(JANICE towards settee)*
- JULIET** *(Throwing wide her arms, chewing gum)* Hello sir, it's me.
(Another hug for the astonished DAVID)
- DAVID** "How do you, pretty lady?"
(He indicates settee and the two new guests sit)
- JUDITH** *(Returning, now curious)* "Curiouser and curiouser!" cried Alice.
- JANICE** We're sorry to barge in uninvited but Juliet came to school to ask after her favourite teacher and, well, here we are.
- DAVID** *(At a fascinated JUDITH who sits)* I thought you were leaving.
- JUDITH** I've changed my mind. I *will* have that rat poison.
- JANICE** Is this a bad time? We can come back later.
- DAVID** Nay, nay, "be truly welcome hither."
- JULIET** It's great to see again you, sir. An' I'm doin' really well at uni.
- DAVID** *(Pleased)* "So wise, so young."
- JANICE** David, I've had trouble tracking you down so I rang your mother and she told me ...
- DAVID** About my spectacular fall from grace. *(Awkward pause)*
- JANICE** *(Softer)* About your new address. *(Another awkward pause)*
- JULIET** Hey sir. *(Imitates Groucho)* "While money can't buy happiness ...
- DAVID** *(Imitates Groucho)* ... it certainly lets you choose your own form of misery."
(JULIET and DAVID amused but the old repartee rings false)
- JANICE** *(Breaking the silence attending to her basket)* Now, David, a few of the staff wanted you to have these things. *(Indicates carrying-bag which contains unseen goodies)*
- JULIET** *(Grabs item from her shoulder bag)* And sir, I've remembered y'favourite choccies.
(The visitors place gifts on table)
- DAVID** "You, and your lady, Take from my heart all thankfulness!"
- JUDITH** With friends like these, who needs a char?
- DAVID** Indeed. Right, manners David. That's two teas and a rat poison. *(Enters kitchen and calls)* Just talk quietly amongst yourselves.
(He potters in kitchen. What can anyone say? Pause)
- JULIET** I think he looks terrific.
(More pausing)
- JANICE** *(To JUDITH)* Are you keeping well?

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JUDITH *(More pausing)*
I've just discovered he's got a woman.
(More pausing)

JULIET Cool.

DAVID *(Returns)* Sorry ladies, I'm fresh out of cucumber sandwiches.

JANICE *(Stands)* Thanks David but we really should be going.
(Subtly indicates to JULIET who stands)

DAVID "Nay, I pray you tarry."

JULIET *(Nudge from JANICE. They had a pre-arranged line to exit)* Oh yeah, I f'got, sir. I've got a tutorial on how to pronounce cer-e-moan-y.

JUDITH *(Stands)* Good heavens, is that the time?

DAVID All of you? And just when the party was starting.

FX *Door knocking*
(Pause. Everyone freezes. DAVID uncertain)

JULIET *(Stating the bleeding obvious)* Someone's at y'door, sir.

THANH *(Calling)* My lord.

JUDITH *(Enjoying the humiliation of her ex)* Methinks a woman's at y'door—my lord.

THANH *(Calling)* Tis thy mistress, my lord.
(DAVID embarrassed and freezes. JANICE throws him a lifeline)

JANICE I don't suppose there's a fire escape?

DAVID *(Decides to tough it out)* Tis my mistress indeed. *(Moves to receive guest. Calling)* Enter.
(Pause. Everyone freezes. THANH enters with food, heads to DAVID ignoring his guests. She stops, bows and offers container. DAVID takes it and both have their hands on the container)

THANH Shitty shitty bang bang. *(She freezes staring at DAVID, he freezes staring at her)*

JUDITH *(Surprised)* It is a mail-order bride.

JANICE *(Sotte voce)* Well, bugger me.

JULIET *(Genuinely impressed)* Cool!

BLACKOUT

FX *Elizabethan music plays*
(When actors have made their exit house lights come up. MUSIC continues for a minute or two)

Interval

Act Two - Scene One

FX *Elizabethan music begins prior to the second act starting*

(Now we begin a series of short scenes. There is barely a break between each scene. The idea is to show the passing of time; another day, another lesson. THANH keeps returning and to further demonstrate each new scene, separated with some music and a lighting change, one or both characters could move to a new position. Maintain the pace. There can be a significant change in costume to begin the second act. When Act 2 begins, 3 or 4 days have passed since the tuition began in earnest. It is a new day.

At first THANH is simply copying, parrot fashion, but then, as the lessons progress and as she has done her homework, THANH is becoming better at speaking Elizabethan English. She develops markedly by the end of this series of scenes, i.e. the end of scene three. In order to accentuate each new lesson, the actors could add a scarf, remove a cardigan, etc. MUSIC fades. Lights up with THANH entering the room guided by DAVID. She sits)

DAVID Come, fair maiden, let us commence thy next lesson and begin with revision. Repeat after me. *(Indicating each one)* Shoon, strossers, forks.

THANH *(Not quickly as she is still learning)* Shoon, strossers, forks.

DAVID *(Indicating quickly)* Ruffs, cuffs, hoops.

THANH *(Not quickly as she is still learning)* Ruffs, cuffs, hoops.

DAVID *(Indicating quickly)* Sweet friends, fulsome, codpiece.

THANH *(Not quickly as she is still learning)* Sweet friends, fulsome, codpiece.

(DAVID moves around to indicate a jacket, vegetables and a cup)

DAVID Gaberdine *(loose outer coat)*, vegetives *(vegetable)*, canakin *(cup)*.

THANH Gaberdine, vegetives, canakin.

DAVID *(Loving it, teases THANH with these words invented by WS)*

Scallywag, sanctimonious, swagger.

THANH *(Loving the game and the language)* Scallywag, sanctimonious, swagger.

(The excitement of the lessons builds. DAVID is in love with the language and teaching – THANH is in love with learning and enjoys DAVID'S passion for words. He gives rich meaning to the words and she imitates him meaning she learns the beautiful language and, at the same time, gets an insight into the human condition)

DAVID Excellent. Thy progress is commendable. But now, resolve *(explain)* me with all modest *(appropriate)* haste.

“Brevity is the soul of wit.”

THANH “Brevity is the soul of wit.”

DAVID “No legacy is so rich as honesty.”

THANH “No legacy is so rich as honesty.”

DAVID “Be not afraid of greatness.”

THANH “Be not afraid of greatness.”

FX *Elizabethan music begins softly*

(The action and dialogue continue uninterrupted)

(Music begins a crescendo, dialogue rises with it, LIGHTING begins to dim)

DAVID “I must be cruel, only to be kind.”

THANH “I must be cruel, only to be kind.”

DAVID “Listen to many, speak to a few.”

THANH “Listen to many, speak to a few.”

DAVID “With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come.”

THANH “With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles *(sic)* come.”

DAVID *(Laughing)* “Wrinkles!”

THANH *(Laughing)* “Wrinkles!”

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(They laugh at the game. MUSIC continues. BLACKOUT for a few seconds. One or both actors could move to a different position)

Act Two - Scene Two

(LIGHTS come up perhaps with a slightly different pattern as it is another day)

FX

Fade MUSIC

(A new lesson begins. THANH is improving as is the relationship between teacher and pupil. Now the lessons are more advanced)

DAVID

Mistress Thanh!

THANH

Master David!

DAVID

A new day and a new lesson.

THANH

Aye, sir.

DAVID

Dost thou wish to speaketh well?

THANH

(Stronger) Aye, sir.

DAVID

Thou art so fine a student.

THANH

Thou art so fine a teacher.

DAVID

Art thou addressed? *(prepared)*

THANH

Aye, sir.

DAVID

Then what pray tell are these? *(He points to his shoes)*

THANH

Shoon. *(He tugs his trousers)* Strossers. *(He raises leg and taps it)* Forks.

(He indicates lips) Sweet friends. *(He pats his stomach)* Fulsome.

DAVID

(He pats his stomach again) And with woman?

THANH

Childing. *(pregnant)*

(He indicates throat) Ruff. *(He indicates wrist)* Cuff.

(He indicates crotch) Codpiece.

DAVID

Bravo. Now for emotions.

(DAVID plays a kind of charades. THANH takes a moment to remember each answer)

DAVID

(Suddenly angry and threatening) Ahhh.

THANH

Mistempered. *(meaning 'angry')*

DAVID

(Suddenly doo-lally) Errr.

THANH

Motley-minded. *(foolish)*

DAVID

(Contemptuous, pointing) Out!

THANH

Tilly-Vally *(contempt)*

DAVID

(Scratching head, uncertain) Ahhh.

THANH

Diffused. *(confused)*

DAVID

(Mimes singing)

THANH

(Uncertain) Reduce. *(to bring back)* Recure. *(recover)* *(Remembers)* Record. *(to sing)*

DAVID

(He points indicating 'yes'. Excited at her progress) Aye! Now, constancy. *(consistency)*

(The lesson or game begins in earnest. THANH completes what DAVID begins)

"What's mine is yours ..."

THANH

"And what is yours is mine."

DAVID

"Better a witty fool ..."

THANH

"Than a foolish wit."

DAVID

"Better three hours too soon ..."

THANH

"Than a minute too late."

DAVID

"Ambition should be made ..."

THANH

"Of sterner stuff."

DAVID

"Boldness ..."

THANH

"Be my friend."

DAVID

"But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks?"

THANH

"It is the east, and Juliet is the one."

DAVID "Sun."
THANH *(Annoyed with herself)* "Sun."
DAVID "Poor and content is rich ..."
THANH "And rich enough."
(Now they're playing games with one another. The tension/drama builds. They are not so much celebrating Shakespeare as using his words to verbally thrust and parry. She is attacked verbally but hits back with a retort giving as good as she gets)
FX *Elizabethan music begins softly*
(The action and dialogue continue uninterrupted)
(Music begins a crescendo, dialogue rises with it, lights begin to dim)
DAVID "Asses are made to bear, and so are you."
THANH "How poor are they that have not patience!"
DAVID "Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?"
THANH "Done to death by slanderous tongue."
DAVID "Frailty, thy name is woman."
THANH "Nothing can come of nothing."
DAVID *(Loud)* "Get thee to a nunnery."
THANH *(Loud)* "Off with thy head!"

BLACKOUT
FX *(Music continues through Blackout then fades slowly once next scene begins)*

Act Two - Scene Three

(Pause a few seconds then lights up. Again the action does not stop. Position of characters changes as does the mood. Another day, another lesson but it is the end of the lesson. They are both tired, almost exhausted, particularly DAVID. He's on the settee, THANH seated elsewhere. Perhaps a slight lighting change but keep the lessons flowing.)

This scene provides the climax where THANH has advanced in learning. Her speech in itself is good but she is also giving an accurate description of DAVID'S life today. He is impressed with her learning but upset that she is attacking him personally. Her words are too close for comfort. His concern is shown by a mixture of modern English, even slang, mixed in with his Shakespearean language. For the first time, their relationship reveals some conflict)

DAVID *(Tired after the lesson)* O Mistress, thy lesson endeth.
THANH *(Also tired after lesson)* Aye, sir.
DAVID Thou art apprehensive *(able to understand)* beyond measure but I am stuff-ed.
THANH *(Concerned about him)* "O, my good lord, why are you thus alone?"
DAVID *(Not interested)* "Prithee, cease thy quilllets." *(wisecracks)*
THANH "For what offence have I this fortnight been
A banished woman from my Harry's bed?"
DAVID *(A touch worried, 'wakes up')* Hang on! I hath not taught thee thus.
THANH "Tell me, sweet lord, what is't [is it] that takes from thee
Thy stomach, pleasure, and thy golden sleep?"
DAVID *(Defensive)* Now let's not get personal.
THANH "Why dost thou bend thine eyes upon the earth,
And start so often when thou sit'st alone?"
DAVID *(Angry)* Hey! Stop this!
THANH "Why hast thou lost the fresh blood in thy cheeks ..."
DAVID Thank!
THANH "And given my treasure and my rights of thee
To thick-eyed musing and cursed melancholy?"

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DAVID *(Anger increases)* Enough, woman! Hold thy tongue!
(THANH says what is literally true about DAVID at this time in his life)

THANH “Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war
That beads of sweat hath stood upon thy brow.”

DAVID *(Furious)* “O most pernicious woman!”

FX *Elizabethan music begins softly and builds
(The action and dialogue continue uninterrupted)
(LIGHTS fade slowly)*

THANH “And in thy face strange motions have appeared.
Oh, what portents are these?”

DAVID *(Threatening)* I’ll give thee bloody portents!

THANH “Some heavy business hath my lord in hand,
And I must know it, else he loves me not.”

DAVID *(Roars)* Enough!

BLACKOUT

(Music swells and continues with ringing telephone added. THANH exits. DAVID sits on floor against settee. MOTHER enters and sits on her phone table)

Act Two - Scene Four

FX *Phone rings. Continues then stops after X number of rings
(Lights come up but the room is dim. MOTHER is lit listening on phone. It is evening that same day. DAVID is sitting on the floor up against the settee. He sits in silence, apart from the ringing phone, with only a single light on. DAVID is tired and his enthusiasm for teaching THANH is being overtaken by his depression. He’s drinking. He can’t forget his missing family, failed marriage and the theft of his life-savings. THANH makes a simple costume change, new shirt perhaps)*

FX “This is David. I’m not here. Speak after the beep. Beep!’ *BEEP*

MOTHER *(Upset - still)* David! Why haven’t you been to visit me? David! Hello?

DAVID *(Doesn’t move)* Pray woman, baffle *(embarrass)* me no more.
(She can’t hear him as he hasn’t answered the phone)

MOTHER Why are you not speaking? Do you want me to die? *(Pause)* David?

DAVID *(Calling)* I’ll race you to the grave, Mother. Last one there’s a sissy! *(Swigs)*

MOTHER “O wonderful son, that can so stonish a mother!” *(Pause. DAVID stops drinking)*
“But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration?”

DAVID *(Shaking head)* Alas, no!

FX *Beeping sound as machine cuts out*

BLACKOUT
(DAVID hops up and lies drunkenly on settee. MOTHER exits)

Act Two - Scene Five

(Very dim lighting comes up, concentrate on settee. Continue straight on. DAVID is wallowing in self-pity. He groans in both physical and mental anguish. We hear his thoughts as three women enter and speak as if they are ghosts)

JUDITH David, you’ve a grandfather again.

DAVID *(Is he dreaming?)* Me? A grandfather? Is it a boy or a girl?

JUDITH They won’t say. Your children have cut you off. *(DAVID despairs)*

JANICE I’m retiring from teaching, David. I’m off to see the world.

DAVID Travel? See the world? But how can you afford it?

JANICE Thank god for my super. *(DAVID despairs)*

JULIET (As Groucho) "He may look like an idiot, and talk like an idiot, but don't let that fool you."
DAVID (As Groucho, sits up) "He really is an idiot."
(The women move closer on their line)
JUDITH Love from your family is wonderful.
JANICE Life in retirement is wonderful.
JULIET (As Groucho) "I intend to live forever or die trying."
DAVID "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,"
WOMEN (Witch-like) "Double, double toil and trouble;"
DAVID "Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,"
WOMEN (Witch-like) "Fire burn, and caldron bubble."
(Now all four speak as one. The WOMEN repeat the two lines of the Witches under DAVID's remaining lines. They speak softly and finish before his final line)
FX Elizabethan music begins softly and builds
DAVID "Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?"
WOMEN (Departing in different directions) "Therein the patient
Must minister to himself."
DAVID (Loud) "Throw physic (medicine) to the dogs, I'll none of it."

BLACKOUT

Act Two - Scene Six

(Lights come up but the room is dim. MUSIC fades. It is the same evening only later and DAVID has been drinking - again. He drinks from a can. He sits on the floor his back against the settee. He sits in silence. He is tired and his enthusiasm for teaching THANH is being overtaken by his depression. He can't forget his missing family, failed marriage and the theft of his life-savings. THANH has made a costume change)

FX Knocking on door
DAVID (Groaning) "Go, go, begone, to save your ship from wrack".
THANH (Pause. Calling from offstage) My lord, art thou within?
DAVID (Softly) Avaunt. (Go away)
FX More knocking
THANH (Pause then THANH opens door and enters quietly. She cannot see him) My lord?
DAVID (More definite) "Avaunt, and quit my sight!"
(THANH follows the sound and is alarmed moving quickly to help him)
THANH My lord, thou art ill.
DAVID (Angry) Begone woman. And I am not thy lord.
THANH I am gasted, (frightened) sire, to see thee so.
DAVID Taketh thy bleeding heart to someone who doth give a damn. (She is shocked)
THANH (Confused) My lord?
DAVID I am a miserable old man and wish to wallow in self-pity without help from any do-gooder including and especially thy good self.
THANH (Thinks she is to blame) Oh sire, what canst I do to earn thy forgiveness?
DAVID (Getting to his feet) Hark! Taketh thy Pho noodles, thy forsooth, verily and palabras (words) and (Louder) bugger off!
THANH (Genuinely upset. Speaks Vietnamese. She has never seen him like this)
Ong oi, toi rat la so
Please sir, I am afraid.

- DAVID** *(Snaps)* And you can stop that bloody gibberish!
(He collapses onto settee or chair, a broken man. Pause)
- THANH** I wilt not forsake thee, my lord. *(He looks at her ready to explode, raises a hand with pointed finger then lets the hand drop, a broken man)* If it pleaseth thee, sire, I canst proffer thee money.
- DAVID** *(Back to life again and incensed)* What?
- THANH** I know I must neither a lender nor a borrower be, but for all my learning, surely a small repayment I couldst make.
- DAVID** *(Angry)* I want not thy money, housewife, *(Shak: hussy, prostitute)* Canst thou not see? *(Indicating himself)* There's no fool like an old fool. Now prithee begone.
- THANH** *(She's going nowhere)* Nay, my lord.
- DAVID** *(Furious)* Nay!?
- THANH** Thou promised a lesson with shopkeepers and I must keep thee to thy word.
(It is not so much she wants the lesson, which she does, but more that she wants to take him out of his self-pity)
- DAVID** *(He whispers at her)* Witch. *(Pause. What will happen? Suddenly points DR. DAVID agrees reluctantly to give the lesson)* Well, get thee yonder. Thou art not yet in my shop.
(Excited. she moves DR and picks up cane basket, then moves to light-switch. More LIGHTING comes up. He staggers to kitchen preparing shop)
- THANH** *(Indicating bag)* My basket.
- DAVID** *(Going behind small table DL. Muttering, mocking)* Oooo, my basket. *(He makes a face then indicating himself)* Behold thy green-grocer.
- THANH** *(Bounces into the shop)* Good morrow, sir. Tis a fine ...
- DAVID** *(Holding up hand meaning stop)* Wrong!
- THANH** *(THANH shocked. She is sure she is correct)* Wrong, my lord?
- DAVID** *(Placing tea-towel on his head as scarf)* Thy shopkeeper art a woman, woman!
- THANH** *(THANH relieved that it's not a major mistake, stifles a laugh then, clearing throat, curtsies)* Good morrow, mistress. Tis a fine new day methinks.
- DAVID** *(Speaking Greek)* Ti thellis? *(What do you want?)*
(THANH stunned. DAVID repeats the question a little annoyed) Ti thellis?
- THANH** *(Confused. She wasn't expecting this)* My lord?
- DAVID** *(As himself)* Ha! Gotcha! This country's a melting-pot of nationalities and language. Be prepared.
- THANH** *(Recovering. Very clever)* "For mine own part, it was Gleek *(sic)* to me."
- DAVID** *(Impressed. Touche)* "With just enough of learning to misquote." *(Byron)* Now, pray continue.
- THANH** Prithee mistress, I desire thy finest vegetives and fruit.
(DAVID now speaks as a Greek woman, part-owner of the greengrocery)
- DAVID** *(As Greek woman)* What a you want?
- THANH** *(Pointing)* There. Leather-coats.
- DAVID** Leather coats? Them is apples. How many you want?
- THANH** Three scarlet crofton.
(DAVID mimes placing three apples in her basket. She mimes accepting them)
- DAVID** One, two ... three. Something else?
- THANH** And violet buds for my sallet. *(salad; violet buds were part of an Elizabethan salad)*
- DAVID** *(Never heard of them)* Violet buds? Sallet?
- THANH** Then love-apples. *(Points to tomatoes)* Prithee, two firm and ripe.
- DAVID** Love apples? *(Thinks she's mad. Mimes placing them in her basket)* Two tomatoes.
- THANH** And *(Pointing)* whortleberries, brambles and apricocks.
- DAVID** What you are talking about? *(Pointing where she pointed)* This here is a blueberries.
- THANH** Nay, whortleberries.
- DAVID** *(Pointing)* This black-a-berries ...

THANH Nay brambles and *(Pointing)* there, apricocks.
DAVID *(Under breath)* Bloody idiot. *(Shaking head. As wife, moves downstage and calls to husband Con offstage)* Hey Con. We got any apricocks? *(Pause. Louder)* A-pri-cocks? *(Pause. To THANH)* He say they same as apricots.

THANH Prithee of each one handful.
(THANH again proffers basket and DAVID mimes placing fruit therein)

DAVID That's a ten a dollar. *(Or appropriate relevant tender)*

THANH Dost thou have vegetives from Sir Walter Raleigh?
DAVID *(Mangled Greek pronunciation)* Wall-ter Rill-ee?
THANH *(Pointing)* Yes, there.
DAVID *(Exasperated)* Them is potatoes!
THANH Prithee thee, five, Walter Raleighs.
(DAVID groans, shakes head. More mimed passing of goods which should not take long)

DAVID That everything, lady?
THANH Nay, mistress, I pray thee, peppercorns.
DAVID *(Pointing)* There. Next to the *(Sarcastic)* apricocks!
THANH *(Helping herself)* I maketh for my lord and master, *(Proud of her proposed recipe)* poached partridge and peppercorns.
DAVID Fifteen a dollar. *(Or equivalent amount in local currency)*
THANH *(Mimes paying)* Ten ... fifteen.
DAVID *(Taking money)* And you be careful with the part-a-ridge. It can give you the runs.
THANH *(Does not understand)* Mistress?
DAVID The runs. *(Grabs stomach and groans)* Ohhhh.
THANH *(Understands)* Ah, shitty shitty bang bang. *(Bows)* Good morrow, mistress. *(THANH moves away from shop and misery-guts DAVID removes scarf from head and collapses on settee. THANH immediately to his side)*

DAVID *(Miserable)* Depart woman, "we will proceed no further in this business".
THANH *(Bright as a button and wants his approval)* Doest I well, sir?
DAVID Aye, yea; now prithee begone.
THANH Nay, sir.
DAVID *(Angry)* Aye, sir. I am sickly ... *(Looks at her)* and of thee.
THANH But thou promised me the post office.
DAVID *(Groaning)* Post office?
THANH Fruit, vegetives and the post office. *(Pause. Minor scold)* Keepeth thou thy word, my lord.
DAVID *(Groaning, gives in reluctantly)* Oh, yea. But thou must Mistress Quickly be. *(a pun on 'move it')*

THANH *(Helping him return to shop counter)* Aye, my lord. I must sendeth thee my letter. *(She takes out envelope and moves upstage ready to enter Post Office)*

DAVID *(Swears)* "Pluto and hell!" *(Pause)* Well, henceforth do what thou wilt.
THANH *(Doesn't want to make the same mistake twice)* Your pardon, my lord, but art thou now a mistress or master?
DAVID *(Snaps)* Master! An ageing, ailing, piss-ed offeth bloke. Now prithee begin. *(THANH enters but is stopped in her tracks)* Not there. *(Rude. Pointing)* There. Can't you read? "Queue here!" *(THANH reads imaginary sign then moves upstage to the right place to queue. Pause as DAVID fiddles with nothing, tidying his counter. He keeps her waiting. She gets impatient, clearing her throat, etc. Finally he calls)* Next! *(THANH approaches counter)*

THANH Prithee, sir, one stamp for mine letter.
DAVID Anything else?
THANH Sir?
DAVID I've got all this junk to sell. Wotcha want?
THANH *(Confused)* Junk, sir?

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- DAVID** Aye. (*Indicating imaginary goods on counter*) Coins, pens, books; the lot.
- THANH** Nay, sir. Prithee one stamp.
- DAVID** You can't just buy one lousy stamp. (*Indicating more imaginary goods on counter*) How about a toothbrush in your football team's colours? (*THANH is shaking her head throughout this spiel*) A CD of the world's most unheard of vocalist? A calligraphy set for the illiterate?
- THANH** (*Persistent*) Nay, sir. Prithee one stamp.
- DAVID** (*Not happy*) One stamp?
- THANH** Aye, sir.
- DAVID** But look here. (*Indicating*) A map of South America which doubles as a poncho; or a cardboard corkscrew for teetotallers.
- THANH** Nay, sir.
- DAVID** (*Indicating vast array of imaginary goods*) Today's post office is a two-dollar shop on speed. (*Indicates imaginary items*) Mobile phone charger for left-handed, unmarried Norwegians. Rain gauge for lapsed Catholics. Winnie the Pooh books with *real* fake honey.
- THANH** (*Stands up for herself*) I pray thee, sir, one stamp for thy letter.
- DAVID** (*Siezes on her mistake*) My letter? Surely tis thine?
- THANH** (*Annoyed/frustrated that she's made a mistake*) Forgive me, sir. Tis mine indeed.
- DAVID** (*Grinning*) So, how can I help? (*She stares at him. He backs off with apology*) One stamp it is. (*He mimes handing it over and she mimes paying. Annoyed she turns and leaves*) Hey, just a minute! (*She stops. He holds out imaginary change*) Your change. (*THANH is humiliated that she has to return to counter and collect her money. She does then returns DR but stops at door of PO as DAVID uses American accent*) Y'all have a nice day!
- THANH** (*Angry but soft, finger-pointing*) Sir, thou art a cretinous, clapper-clawed codpiece!
- DAVID** (*Amused, moves to settee, almost a throw-away line*) Oh well-said, mistress. I love thy wit.
- THANH** (*Moving to him still angry, louder*) A measley, onion-eyed lewdster!
- DAVID** (*More amusement from DAVID*) I like it! More! Insult me again!
- THANH** (*THANH in close*) Thou flap-mouthed, bat-fowling, fen-sucked bum-bailey!
- DAVID** Yes! (*Delight from DAVID as the furious THANH exits upstage. Suddenly, without delay, she returns and stands upstage. DAVID is still chortling. He is not looking at her*) Go on, another insult, I beg thee. More. (*Faces front, still amused*)
- THANH** (*Soft*) I cannot, my lord.
- DAVID** (*Bubbling, enjoying the moment*) I love it when thou speakest dirty.
- THANH** (*Pause. Sincere. Still soft*) I knowest I love thee. (*Pause then quickly exits*)
- DAVID** (*She is gone. DAVID still laughing when the penny drops. Takes him a second to take it all in*) (*Laughing stops suddenly*) What? (*Turns to see her gone*) Hey! (*Getting up*) Woman! Hey, come back. (*Louder*) Mistress! (*DAVID shocked. Hand to head. He repeats her last sentence*) "I knowest I love thee." What the hell was that all about? (*In disbelief*)
- FX** *Phone rings interrupting his thoughts*
- DAVID** Steady, Dave. She's young enough to be your child bride. (*Staggered. Repeats her line*) "I knowest I love thee."
(*Without thinking he goes to phone and hits speaker-phone. Ringing stops when he hits button. It's you know who*)
- DAVID** Hello Mother.
- MOTHER** David, I'm dying. I can feel it in my bones. (*Pause*) Did you hear what I said?
- DAVID** (*Not sarcastic, almost human, thinking of THANH*) That's nice.
- MOTHER** I hope you've booked my cemetery plot. I know my time is up.
- DAVID** "Can one desire too much of a good thing?"
- MOTHER** There comes a time when a person knows ... (*Surprised*) what did you say?

DAVID *(Actually listens to her)* I'm sorry. What did you say?
MOTHER Have you been drinking?
DAVID I fear, mistress, I may be drunk on love.
MOTHER *(Angry)* Oh you wretched man. You've still got that mail-order bride.
DAVID *(In a daze repeats her words)* "I knowest I love thee."
MOTHER You gorbellied, folly-fallen maggot-pie!
DAVID *(Suddenly pleased)* But that's what *she* said.
MOTHER She's a gold-digger. She only wants your money.
DAVID No gold here, Mother.
MOTHER Then it must be sex. And you're obviously popping those Niagara *(sic)* pills.
DAVID Not guilty, m'lud. The young lady's best friends and mine remain steadfastly distant.
MOTHER How can you be so gullible?
DAVID *(Shaking head)* Well you know what the great man told us, Mother. "Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind." *(Into speaker phone)* "Good night! Good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow."
(Hits off button. LIGHTS off MOTHER who exits. DAVID thinks aloud. What's happening? What does he feel for THANH? More importantly, what does she feel for him?)
DAVID You're wrong, Davy; hopelessly so. You're clutching at cupid's straws. "Jove knows I love: But who?" *(Confused)* Yet I heard her speak.
(He repeats that crucial sentence) "I knowest I love thee."

(Another thought) Nah, it's my *hearing*. What she really said was, 'I goest to make tea.' *(Frustrated)* Oh, help me, Will. "Crabbed age and youth cannot live together. *(He is genuinely confused)*

But what if she really *does* fancy me? *(Touching his hair, feeling his face)* "Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty." *(Boosting his case)* And older men make better lovers. *(Suddenly panics)* Oh god, what if I have to prove it? *(Looks at crutch)* Is there a lock on the toolshed? Can I still ride a two-wheeler? Do I need Viagaras for my Niagaras?
FX *Elizabethan music begins softly*
DAVID *(Feeling face)* What I *do* need is a shave. *(Feels hair)* And a transplant. *(Feels/pats stomach)* And a bloody corset. You're right, Oscar. "Youth is wasted on the young." *(Oscar Wilde)* *(Exits to bathroom)*
BLACKOUT
(Music continues. Lights up as it finishes. THANH has been shopping and wears a change of clothes. She carries a large cloth suitcase. DAVID is at his best – well he thinks he is)

Act Two - Scene Seven

FX *Door knocking*
(Lights up next morning. Room is empty)
DAVID *(Calling from bathroom)* Pray enter.
THANH *(Enters excited with bulging shopping bag)* Good morrow my lord.
DAVID *(Calling)* I am without attending to my ablutions. Prithee be seated.
THANH *(Placing bag on settee, fusses and has back to bathroom)* I cannot my lord. I bring thee great news.
DAVID *(Nervous)* Oh? Pray tell.
THANH Nay my lord. I must gaze upon thy countenance. *(TRANH fusses with bag)*
DAVID *(Uncertain)* Really?
THANH Prithee make haste, sire. My heart it beats apace.

(Pause. DAVID is nervous. Suddenly he enters and freezes striking a pose a la a male model. In a hopeless attempt to look younger and attractive to THANH, he wears an Asian dressing gown. He looks ridiculous. THANH is gobsmacked)

DAVID “Sweet lady, ho, ho.” *(Pause. She stares)* I feel much younger today.

THANH “Why, how dost thou, man? what is the matter with thee?” *(Awkward pause)*

DAVID *(Moving at last. Realises his folly)* Right. “Why stand we prating *(chatting)* here?”
(Changing subject) I see thou hast to market been.

THANH *(Back on track)* Oh yea, sire, tis truth indeed. I hath bought *(Indicates bag)* these goods yet speaking only our beloved Elizabethan English.

DAVID “So wise so young.”. And that is thy good news?

THANH It was a test of what thou hast taught me.

DAVID I see.

THANH The stall-holder sold me the finest love apples and the filthiest Walter Raleighs.

DAVID Really?

THANH But he chargeth me too much, my lord and thus I told him so. I cursed him as thou hath taught me.

DAVID *(Surely not)* Thou cursed him?

THANH Thou wouldst have been so proud, my lord. Behold. *(Demonstrates her fury)* “A pox upon thy house, sir, and upon thy children and thy children’s children.”
(Pause. She awaits his praise)

DAVID *(Not sure how to behave)* Excellent. A fine curse. *(Pause)* And that is thy news?

THANH *(But the best is yet to come)* Nay, sir. I hath saved the best till last.

DAVID *(Confused, shattered, embarrassed or all three)* Oh?

THANH As I left the market I declared the sting of my wrath. *(Demonstrates again)* “May thou forever kiss the coarseness of thy mother-in-law’s foul-smelling arse!”
(THANH is thrilled with her triumph and awaits the approval of DAVID. He both looks and feels stupid. Has he made a huge miscalculation? Does THANH have romantic feelings for him? Who knows? But what she wants is an immediate crit on her first foray into the Sassenach (Scragger) streets. She awaits his approval)

DAVID *(Stunned)* “Blessed fig’s end!” *(Compliments her)* Thou hast spoken with the voice of angels.

THANH *(THANH thrilled and places bag aside and bows)* I thank thee, my lord. Thou art a most excellent teacher.

DAVID *(Turns away to exit)* Prithee excuse me. I have my fantasies to ablute.

THANH But stay, my lord. *(He stops)* I have yet to speak of my great news.

DAVID *(He turns. Dramatic pause)* That was not thy great news?

THANH *(Beaming)* Nay my lord. I speak roundly *(plainly)* of something most wondrous. Tis news to make heaven seem even the happier.

DAVID Goodness. That sounds ... *(He pinches her word)* wondrous.

THANH *(Pause. Big announcement)* My lord, *(Pause)* I am in love.

DAVID *(Pause, in shock)* “How now, what is in you?”

THANH I hath my heart betrothed and can no longer keep from telling thee so.

DAVID *(Still uncertain. Is the on-again, off-again romance on again? Softly)* Bloody hell!

THANH This matter hath troubled me greatly, sire but now I feel my heart new opened and love I fain *(willingly)* would pledge.

DAVID *(Hesitant. Takes deep breath)* Then pledge, pray pledge.

THANH *(Goes to him. Does she kneel?)* It is thee, my lord, who hath released my heart’s desire. It is thee, gracious sire, who hath given me courage and skill to love. I pray thee, grant me thy blessing and tell me thy heart soars as does mine.

DAVID It does. *(She looks up for confirmation. He nods. With emotion)* It soars. It soars.

THANH *(Stands, takes his hand and kisses it)* Because of thee I have expressed my love to the man I love.

- DAVID** *(Emotional)* Ohhhh. *(Pause. Confusion)* Because of me?
- THANH** *(Beaming)* Aye, my lord.
- DAVID** *(The penny drops)* To the man thou dost love?
- THANH** He speaketh not Elizabethan English, yet but when I spoke what thou hath taught me, he knew my love for him was true.
- DAVID** *(Pause)* Verily?
- THANH** Aye, verily. And this is what I spoke. *(Repeats what she said to her true love)* “When I saw you I fell in love, and you smiled because you knew.”
- DAVID** *(Nodding, dream-like)* “I was adored once too.” *(Pause. She wants his approval. He snaps back to reality)* Oh and doth thy Romeo have a name?
- THANH** He is called Huu. *(pronounced Who)*
- DAVID** Who?
- THANH** Aye, Huu.
- DAVID** *(Are you sure)* Who?
- THANH** *(Doesn't understand)* Yea, Huu.
- DAVID** *(Once a joker)* I don't suppose Who's on first?
- THANH** *(Not yet up to the chapter on Abbot and Costello)* And I hath told him of thy great kindness and he fain *(gladly)* would make thy acquaintance.
- DAVID** *(Shaking head)* Alas I am busy this day.
- THANH** His family will be honoured to welcome thee, sire.
- DAVID** *(Shocked)* His family?
- THANH** They wish to herald the great man who helped their son find love.
- DAVID** Nonsense. *(She is hurt)* I mean I goeth not to social events. *(She will not take NO for an answer)* And I hath nothing to wear. Methinks I am a punk. *(Female prostitute)*
- THANH** *(Delighted)* I knoweth that, my lord.
- DAVID** *(Indignant)* Thou knoweth?
- THANH** *(Busies herself at her shopping bag and produces cloth)* And therefore hath made provision. Here is cloth from the market to maketh thee trossers and a gabardine.
- DAVID** Nay mistress. “You'll do no such thing.”
- THANH** I have begun already, my lord.
- DAVID** Begun already?
- THANH** *(Approaches with tape measure)* I need thy final measure. *(She moves behind him placing measure around his waist. She is business-like, he upset)*
- DAVID** Hey! *(He mutters)* What doest thou, mistress?
- THANH** *(Reads tape, makes note and indicates/pats his stomach)* Quite fulsome, my lord. “Eight wild-boars roasted whole at a breakfast.” *(He goes to protest but stops as she measures his arm)*
- DAVID** Stop this nonsense! I protest! How dare thee! *(She makes another note then kneels beside him)*
- THANH** If thou please, my lord? *(She holds out end of tape)*
- DAVID** What?
- THANH** Wilt thou place the measure at thy codpiece? *(Stunned, DAVID takes the measure then holds end of tape inside his trousers. THANH kneels and measures his inside leg distance at his ankle)*
- DAVID** This is an outrage! *(She takes measure, stands and makes note)* I wilt not allow thy business to unfold.
- THANH** *(Smiling busy with materials)* Methinks the gentleman protesteth too much.
- DAVID** *(Tries a new tack to get out of the visit)* “Forbear *(cease)* this talk.” I've done nothing to deserve thy fussing.
- THANH** On the contrary, my lord, thou hast done everything.

- DAVID** I'm a recluse with no need of garments new.
THANH Thou wilt be resplendent, sir.
DAVID (*Anger building*) Bugger resplendent; I desire to be alone.
THANH Thou canst not mean that, my lord.
DAVID (*Explodes, manhandles her*) Damn thee mistress. I wish to be as happy as a bastard on fathers' day, so pray sticketh thy inside-leg measurement up thy fundament and closeth the door behind thee. (*Pointing*) "Out damned spot! Out I say!"
(*Pause. Silence. THANH is distressed. DAVID ashamed*)
THANH (*Picking up things, starts to exit. Softly*) Forgive me, my lord.
DAVID (*Pause then goes after her. Contrite*) No, wait. Don't go. (*She keeps going*) Thanh!
(*Louder*) Prithee, stop!
(*She stops and turns to face him. He moves towards her*)
(*Humble*) It is I who must beg forgiveness.
THANH (*She shakes her head*) Nay sir.
DAVID (*He nods*) Yea sir.
(*He kneels, holds her hand and bows his head. Does he cry?*)
THANH (*She places hand under his chin and lifts his face*) "Pray you now, forget and forgive."
DAVID I must explain.
(*He kisses her hand and she helps him stand. She is bright and enthusiastic again*)
THANH (*She indicates settee*) Well then, come, my lord. (*Mimics DAVID, saying what he once said to her. Pointing*) David, sit!
(*They quietly enjoy the joke but these are heavy times as they return to the settee*)
DAVID "I am not bound to please thee with my answer."
THANH "When words are scarce they are seldom spent in vain."
DAVID I am sad. I am old.
THANH Methinks young at heart, my lord.
DAVID (*Puts finger to his lips. She understands and lets him explain*) We each "suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" but my pain is worse because of my years. I have lost my family and my fortune. I have lost my will to live.
THANH Thou art mistaken, my lord.
DAVID I had dreams of writing, of travel and of finding my family again. Now my dreams have flown. My son, my darling boy, is involved with drugs and may well be dead. My daughter's cruel faith demands no contact with non-believers so my grand-children hath never even *heard* of me. My wife despises me and lives with a woman. (*THANH surprised. DAVID shakes head*) And my mother ...
(*Despairs, breaks down. He is depressed and miserable with physical pain from his worries*)
(*Comforts him*) I wilt not forsake thee, sire.
THANH (*Lost in his grief*) And all this now, at the *end* of my life, when passion is spent and hope is gone. Why not the beginning or middle of my life? Now, tis too late.
THANH Nay sir. "True hope is swift and flies with swallow's wings."
DAVID (*Saying aloud what he has thought for weeks; imagines*) I was to stroll the streets of Dickensian London; explore Top Withens and Hardy country; and by the Avon, I would worship with Will. (*He's lost in his own misery*)
THANH And still so, my lord.
DAVID Then, within me, a book; a sparkling, inspiring text of how to fall in love with *the* most beautiful language. But my dream is no more and I am undone.
THANH (*Worried*) Nay, sir, nay.
DAVID (*Despairs*) "Oft expectation fails, and most oft where most it promises; and oft it hits where hope is coldest; and despair most sits."
(*He cries quietly, could even sob with face in hands*)
THANH (*Softly*) "It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves."
(*Pause. DAVID recovers a little, wipes his face*)

- DAVID** (*Giving advice*) If ever thou suffer misfortune, do so when young. (*Indicating himself*) Behold this pathetic figure. I wear the grotesque robe of self-pity. I am dressed to die but worse, I am too old to care. (*More despair*)
- THANH** (*Goes to him*) Prithee, my lord, lift up thy heart.
- DAVID** (*Recovering*) Look at thee; healthy, young, the world at thy feet, with time and scope to dream. "Age, with his stealing steps, Hath clawed me in his clutch."
- THANH** I beg thee, sir, desist from thy sadness.
- DAVID** And thou hast family. Grandparents to love and care for; thy young man and his family. Mine hath absconded and I am undone. Pray forget me. Flee. Live thy life, thou who hath everything and youth.
- THANH** (*Long pause*) Twas not always so, my lord.
(*He's not listening to her. His self-pity dominates*)
- DAVID** (*Despairs, hates himself*) "Last scene of all, that ends this strange eventful history ... mere oblivion, Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."
- THANH** "Oh, I have suffered with those that I saw suffer!" (*Pause. He looks at her. Removing photos from her bag or pocket*) I hath ... keepsakes.
- DAVID** (*Deeply sad*) "Hell is murky!" (*Pause. Slow to recover. Looks at her*) What?
- THANH** (*She holds out a photo*) My family, sire.
- DAVID** Family? (*Taking photo*) See, healthy, strong and young. *Young!*
- THANH** (*Hands him another photo*) My father, my lord.
- DAVID** A young man, healthy, professional - with a future.
- THANH** He was murdered, my lord.
- DAVID** (*Is not listening. Handing her photos*) "We will proceed no further in this matter."
(*Pause. DAVID is still wrapped up in his own misfortune. It takes him a moment or so to understand what she has said*)
- THANH** (*Handing him another photo*) And my mother. (*Pause*) She was raped.
- DAVID** (*Stunned. Pause. Takes photo*) Raped? Murdered?
- THANH** (*Handing another photo*) My brothers and sisters. (*Pause*) All dead.
- DAVID** (*Shocked, looks at photo*) Dead? All of them?
- THANH** (*Nodding, THANH produces a letter, old, well folded*) The tale of my family, here 'tis translated into the modern English.
(*He opens the letter and reads. LIGHTING change as THANH through DAVID relates her family's history. Use lighting change to add to the pathos and danger of the tale*)
- FX** Vietnamese music begins
- DAVID** (*Reading*) "The Americans left Vietnam and my parents were afraid. The soldiers took my father to a re-education camp. My mother fed six children on bo-bo grains." (*He is unsure*) Bo-bo?
- THANH** Tis grain for horses, my lord. It swells inside and fills the belly.
- DAVID** (*Continues to read*) "Many people disappeared and were never seen again. The authorities were cruel and dangerous." (*Looks at THANH*) Who wrote this?
- THANH** My older sister, in Vietnamese ... before she died.
- DAVID** (*In shock then returns to reading*) "My mother bribed officials to have my father released. But the authorities stole our home. Many people tried to escape and my parents joined them." (*Looks at her*) Escape?
- THANH** At least one million Vietnamese, sire, and nearly all by sea. We became the 'boat people'.
- DAVID** (*Reading*) "With gold hidden in our clothes, we took only rice and water and walked for days. We could easily have been arrested. My mother told us to be as quiet as a mouse but my baby sister, Thanh, would often cry."
(*He stops, looks at her*)
- THANH** (*Indicating herself*) I was a noisy baby, my lord.

- DAVID** *(Back to letter)* “We sank up to our necks in mud. My parents saved us. There were hundreds waiting for boats.” *(Looks at THANH)*
- THANH** Our boat was old and small and we were 112 people.
- DAVID** *(Back reading)* “We left Vietnam and prayed we would be safe. While still in the river we heard screams. An old boat sank and many people drowned. Our journey was hard. We had little food or water. The ship’s engine stopped and we drifted. Then we saw another boat. We prayed for help but instead met unimaginable horror. The pirates did unspeakable things.” *(MUSIC ENDS)*
- THANH** “We can’t go on with this plan.” *(She reaches for the letter. He looks at her)*
- DAVID** I would like to continue ... if it is not too hard for thee.
- THANH** *(Quietly)* Nay, sir. Prithee continue.
- FX** *Sound effects of fighting and crying*
Major lighting change - colour - to enhance the drama of the story
- DAVID** *(Continues to read)* “With hammers and knives, the pirates killed my father and all the men. *(As the tale unfolds, THANH fights to control her emotions)* One old man had gold fillings and the pirates pulled out his teeth with pliers. The boys, including my brothers, were bashed then thrown screaming into the sea. The women smeared engine oil and stinking fish on their faces and hair to stop the pirates from raping them. But nothing stopped the evil and terror. Some young girls bled to death. Some were attacked even after they died. I sat on my baby sister, Thanh, to hide her. I heard my mother cry out as she was raped. Some women begged to be thrown overboard.”
(DAVID confused, looks at THANH)
- THANH** Drowning endeth the rapes, my lord.
- DAVID** *(Shakes his head in disbelief; reads again)* “The pirates stole our money and left the women to bleed to death. Our boat drifted and we lived on rain water. We fell asleep listening to our mother sobbing. She prayed for death.” *(He looks at her)*
- THANH** I was lucky to be so young.
- DAVID** *(Reading)* “We drifted towards land but the people made a fishing boat tow us back out to sea. We drifted until a cargo ship saved our lives. The day we were rescued my mother died.”
- THANH** We were placed in a camp. My sister told her story to the refugee official before she died. As a young girl without a family I was sent back to Vietnam. My father’s cousin adopted me and after many years, I hath discovered my only living grandparents and so am here, in my new country. *(She smiles)*
- FX** *Fighting sounds fade*
Normal lighting returns
- DAVID** *(Handing back letter, stunned)* I had no idea.
- THANH** Some nights I canst hear my mother wailing. Today I fear any journey by boat.
- DAVID** So you grew up in Vietnam?
- THANH** In a rural village, sir, like William Shakespeare.
- DAVID** *(Amazed)* Thou art amazing.
- THANH** My grandparents sponsored me and now I sew clothes and learn to speak the most beautiful language from the most wonderful teacher.
- DAVID** *(Pause. DAVID overcome)* I do not know what to say.
- THANH** Much good fortune is mine, my lord.
- DAVID** *(Distress deepens)* Thou hast brought me great shame.
- THANH** *(Upset)* Nay sir.
- DAVID** I hath bemoaned my fate when beside thine ‘tis nothing – *nothing!*
- THANH** We both hath lost our family, sir.

DAVID But thou hath lost family and thy innocence and sew clothes for a pittance being told by some, 'Go home Asian!'

THANH But my *good* fortune, sir. Freedom, work, new friends ... and thee.

DAVID (*More upset*) My suffering pales beside thine and I am ashamed.

FX *Scene-change music begins softly*

THANH (*She worries about him*) My lord.

DAVID (*Pleading now, not ordering*) Leave me, I beg thee.

THANH (*Herself distressed*) Nay sir.

DAVID Forgive me then leave me.
(*Tense moment. He is distraught and she knows it. She moves to door then stops*)

THANH "A friend is one that knows you as you are, understands where you have been, accepts what you have become, and still, gently allows you to grow." (*She exits*)

DAVID "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more; (*Lights fade*) it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." (*Cries in despair*) Ahhh!

BLACKOUT
(*MUSIC swells*)

Act Two - Scene Eight

(*Music plays for a few seconds as DAVID 'dishevels'. It is next morning. Lights come up as music fades. DAVID has fallen asleep on the settee. His casual attire is worse than ever – shirt undone, hanging out, one sock half off, hair ruffled, etc. DAVID is obviously asleep following some heavy drinking after THANH left. THANH'S history has only added to his depression. Suddenly there is a loud knocking on the door. It is THANH with goodies for DAVID*)

THANH (*Calling from offstage*) My lord! Art thou within?
(*Her knocking and calling wakes DAVID*)

DAVID What was that? (*He sits up causing empty can/s to spill on the floor*) "Rabbit-sucker!"
(*More door knocking. He half falls off the settee, groans*)

THANH (*Enters*) Sire! I bringeth sweet offerings.
(*More groans from DAVID and THANH comes in*)

DAVID Be still my beating ... (*Nursing head*) head!

THANH (*Suddenly concerned, puts large bag on floor and goes to him*) My lord, thou art ill.

DAVID Not ill, mistress ... (*burp or hiccup*) hung-over.

THANH (*Reacting to his foul odour*) And methinks a friend of thy wine.

DAVID Begone woman so I may wallow in self-pity.

THANH (*Helping him to stand*) Gladly my lord but first thy fitting.

DAVID (*Suffering, he is hungover. Short cry of pain*) Ah! Stop those bloody drums.

THANH (*Fetching light jacket*) Here sire, thy new gabardine. (*He looks at it*) For thy meeting this day.

DAVID (*Shaking head*) Nay!

THANH (*Holding coat for him*) Thou wilt be resplendent.

DAVID (*He refuses. Louder*) Nay! Begone!

THANH (*She helps him begin to dress*) Come sire, be thou trimmed. (*dressed up*)

DAVID (*Not happy*) Cease thy labour! I do not desire this.
(*She collects trousers from bag as he removes the jacket and puts it on himself*)

THANH Now sire, away with thy old trossers. (*She starts to pull them down*)

DAVID Hey! Desist woman! (*She stops and is embarrassed*)

THANH Forgive me, sire. (*She turns away from him*) I wilt mine eyes avert.
(*He stares at her. Nothing's happening. She turns back and points to his old trossers*)

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- DAVID** *(Grumbling he removes his old trousers revealing old legs and even older underpants)* Thou art evil, mistress, evil! *(He groans and stumbles. She helps him)*
- THANH** My lord!
- DAVID** *(Recovering balance, ordering her away)* Begone, I am still able.
- THANH** *(Handing him the new trossers and taking his old ones)* Here, sire.
- DAVID** *(Stepping into them)* Yea, enough! I may be old and with ale but I am still manly – *(Trossers finally on, looking at his crotch as he tucks in shirt)* ... just.
- THANH** *(Admiring him)* Oh my lord, verily thou art a picture. “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day? Thou art more lovely and”
- DAVID** Enough Mistress! I do not want this. “I have lived long enough.”
- THANH** Come sir, what nonsense is this?
- DAVID** Thy family’s suffering makes my unhappiness seem as none. And now *(Indicating clothes)* you bestow great kindness I do not deserve.
- THANH** I am repaying thy kindness.
- DAVID** Kindness? I hath burdened thee with my self-pity.
- THANH** Thou hast showered me with love unbounded; with that precious gift of language thou hast made my tongue sing words of truth and beauty.
- DAVID** Piffle!
- THANH** We both hath suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, my lord, but that is time past. Now, this day, we hath love, hope and life to share and enjoy.
- DAVID** What tomfoolery is this thou speaketh?
- THANH** *(Softer)* One request I wouldst make, my lord.
- DAVID** Request?
- THANH** At my betrothal, sire ...
- DAVID** I told thee, I goeth not!
- THANH** ... wilt thou be my father?
- DAVID** *(Stunned. Pause. Soft)* What?
- THANH** I am to be given away and if I could choose one person in the entire universe, sire, it would be thee. *(He is speechless. She moves to him)* Say thou wilt, my lord. I know love dwells in thy heart. Share thy love and I wilt be proud beyond measure.
- DAVID** *(He’s fighting a losing battle)* I cannot. Nay.
- THANH** *(The knockout punch)* “I knowest I love thee.”
- DAVID** *(Pause. Agrees)* Yea, yea I shall.
- THANH** *(She is overjoyed)* Thank thee, sire, thank thee. *(She kisses his hand with delight and is transformed. Runs to her case)* Shoons, my lord and thy napkin. *(She fetches shoes and hands him his handkerchief for his breast pocket. She is excited)*
- DAVID** What doest thou?
- THANH** *(Calling as she prepares to exit)* Hasten my lord; “all the world’s a stage” and we are both surely players. I must Mistress Quickly be. *(She exits and he puts on his shoes talking as he dresses)*
- DAVID** “What fools these mortals be.” “What a deformed thief this fashion is.” *(Once ready, he stands)* “Then up he rose, and donn’d his clothes.” *(He could walk to a mirror on a wall and admire himself. He has on new trossers, jacket, shoes and places handkerchief in his breast pocket)*
- FX** Telephone rings
- DAVID** *(Moving to phone adjusting his attire)* Just when life offers a glimmer of hope. *(Hits speaker-phone button)* Hello Mother.
- MOTHER** David, I’ve run out of my heart tablets. I need you to go to the chemist, immediately.

- DAVID** I'm sorry about that, Mother. Have you rung the chemist?
MOTHER I want *you* to ring the chemist.
DAVID Well, all right but I am rather busy.
MOTHER Busy? You're never busy.
DAVID I've got to meet Thanh's fiancée's family.
MOTHER Oh you're not still living with that money-grubbing foreign bride?
DAVID Not quite. And there's more news. My new teaching career is blooming.
MOTHER You can't teach. You're too old.
DAVID I'm tutoring a young student who has majored in Shakespeare.
MOTHER (*Interested. For once is not critical*) Shakespeare?
DAVID And as you're an expert on the Bard, I wondered if you might quiz her?
MOTHER Me? I'm too old.
DAVID If anyone can find fault with my student, Mother, it's you.
MOTHER I can't.
DAVID Now come on, Mother, be fair. You're a genius when it comes to finding fault.
MOTHER But I'm dying. And I want to be miserable and wallow in self-pity.
DAVID That's copyright. I have that line.
MOTHER What?
DAVID Please Mother. You used to be so good at testing my Shakespeare.
MOTHER Oh all right. Bring her with you when you fetch my pills.
DAVID Actually she's here now. (*Mock announcement*) "Look! Here she comes."
MOTHER Well don't be long, my hair is getting tired.
DAVID (*DAVID moves to one side and faces upstage. He calls*)
Mistress? Art thou without?
THANH (*Pause. THANH appears dressed in a formal Vietnamese outfit. This is out of respect for the parents and grandparents of Huu her fiancée. She smiles and bows*)
My lord.
DAVID (*Bows*) Mistress. (*He leads her downstage where she can literally be seen by the actress playing MOTHER*) Mother, may I introduce my Shakespearean student.
MOTHER I can't hear a thing.
DAVID Patience, Mother. (*He nods to THANH*)
MOTHER (*She thinks THANH is called Patience*) Oh, hello Patience. (*Pause*) Well get on with it. Let me hear your Shakespeare.
DAVID (*THANH is unsure. DAVID smiles at THANH. She takes a deep breath, stands tall and recites her favourite passage*)

THANH "Come, gentle night; come, loving, black-browed night;
Give me my Romeo; and, when I shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night..."
DAVID (*Pause*) Mother?
MOTHER She's very good.
DAVID Shakespeare is right, Mother. "Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind."
MOTHER She speaks quite well. I would say she lives near me in South Yarra. (*Upper-class suburb. Others delighted*) Did she go to Merton Hall? (*Wealthy private school for girls*)
DAVID (*More delight from duo*)
DAVID That's quite remarkable, Mother. May I ask her to read for you again?
MOTHER Well all right. But don't forget my tablets.
DAVID Perhaps we could *both* come and visit you. (*THANH smiles and nods*)
MOTHER (*Shocked*) Visit me? (*Pause*) Well, that might be nice.

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DAVID Yes, it would be nice. And thank you, Mother.
THANH Thank thee, Mistress.
MOTHER Thank *thee*. And fare thee well.
(He hits off button. Lights killed on MOTHER who exits)
(DAVID is thrilled. They hold hands and skip around)

DAVID My god, Pickering, we did it. *(THANH is very happy)*
THANH To see thee smiling, my lord ... tis wondrous.
FX *Elizabethan music begins softly*
(They face one another)

DAVID "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"
THANH "Thou art more lovely and more temperate."
(They rejoice in their new-found happiness and play a Shakespearean game. They may well mean what they are saying about their platonic relationship, but it's also a game of who can remember the most "love quotes" from the Bard)

DAVID "I do love nothing in the world so well as you."
THANH "Hereafter, I shall desire more love and knowledge of you."
DAVID "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds."
THANH "If music be the food of love, play on."
(He indicates door, she takes his arm)

DAVID Come Mistress, let us depart.
THANH My gracious lord.
DAVID Now wilt there be dining at thy fiancée's dwelling?
THANH Oh ay, my lord.
DAVID Some of thy finest Vietnamese cuisine?
THANH Indeed, and which surely will visit thee with
(Pause as they look at one another then speak as one with happiness)

BOTH shitty shitty bang bang.
(They exit laughing as the music swells and the lights fade)

BLACKOUT

Curtain Calls

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