

TOULON. I'll note your opinions in my report. The Americans always love to hear how "welcome" they'll be. *(He starts to exit.)*

GALLIMARD. Sir?

TOULON. Mmmm?

GALLIMARD. This . . . rumor you've heard.

TOULON. Uh-huh?

GALLIMARD. How . . . widespread do you think it is?

TOULON. It's only widespread within this embassy. Where nobody talks because everybody is guilty. We were worried about you, Gallimard. We thought you were the only one here without a secret. Now you go and find a lotus blossom . . . and top us all. *(He exits.)*

GALLIMARD. *(To us.)* Toulon knows! And he approves! I was learning the benefits of being a man. We form our own clubs, sit behind thick doors, smoke — and celebrate the fact that we're still boys. *(He starts to move U.S., towards Song.)* So, over the — *(Suddenly Comrade Chin Enters. Gallimard backs away. To Song.)* No! Why does she have to come in?

SONG. Rene, be sensible. How can they understand the story without her? Now, don't embarrass yourself. *(Gallimard moves D.C.)*

GALLIMARD. *(To us.)* Now, you will see why my story is so amusing to so many people. Why they snicker at parties in disbelief. Please — try to understand it from my point of view. We are all prisoners of our time and place. *(He exits.)*

SCENE 4

Gallimard and Butterfly's flat. Beijing. 1961.

SONG. *(To us.)* 1961. The flat Monsieur Gallimard rented for us. An evening after he has gone.

CHIN. Okay, see if you can find out when the Americans plan to start bombing Vietnam. If you can find out what cities, even better.

SONG. I'll do my best, but I don't want to arouse his suspicions.

CHIN. Yeah, sure, of course. So, what else?

SONG. The Americans will increase troops in Vietnam to 170,000 soldiers with 120,000 militia and 11,000 American advisors.

CHIN. *(Writing.)* Wait, wait, 120,000 militia and —

SONG. — 11,000 American —

CHIN. — American advisors. *(Beat.)* How do you remember so much?

SONG. I'm an actor.

CHIN. Yeah. *(Beat.)* Is that how come you dress like that?

SONG. Like what, Miss Chin?

CHIN. Like that dress! You're wearing a dress. And every time I come here, you're wearing a dress. Is that because you're an actor? Or what?

SONG. It's a . . . disguise, Miss Chin.

CHIN. Actors, I think they're all weirdos. My mother tells me actors are like gamblers or prostitutes or —

SONG. It helps me in my assignment. *(Pause.)*

CHIN. You're not gathering information in any way that violates Communist Party principles, are you?

SONG. Why would I do that?

CHIN. Just checking. Remember: when working for the Great Proletarian State, you represent our Chairman Mao in every position you take.

SONG. I'll try to imagine the Chairman taking my positions.

CHIN. We all think of him this way. Good-bye, comrade. *(She starts to exit.)* Comrade?

SONG. Yes?

CHIN. Don't forget: there is no homosexuality in China!

SONG. Yes, I've heard.

CHIN. Just checking. *(She exits.)*

SONG. *(To us.)* What passes for a woman in modern China. *(Gallimard sticks his head out from the wings.)*

GALLIMARD. Is she gone?

SONG. Yes, Rene. Please continue in your own fashion.

SCENE 5

Beijing. 1961-63.

Gallimard moves to the couch where Song still sits. He lies down in her lap, and she strokes his forehead.

GALLIMARD. (*To us.*) And so, over the years, 1961, '62, '63, we settled into our routine, Butterfly and I. She would always have prepared a light snack and then, ever so delicately, and only if I agreed, she would start to pleasure me. With her hands, her mouth . . . too many ways to explain, and too sad, given my present situation. But mostly we would talk. About my life. Perhaps there is nothing more rare than to find a woman who passionately listens. (*Song remains U.S., listening, as Helga enters and plays a scene D.S. with Gallimard.*)

HELGA. Rene, I visited Dr. Bolleart this morning.

GALLIMARD. Why? Are you ill?

HELGA. No, no. You see, I wanted to ask him . . . that question we've been discussing.

GALLIMARD. And I told you, it's only a matter of time. Why did you bring a doctor into this? We just have to keep trying—like a crapshoot, actually.

HELGA. I went, I'm sorry. But listen: he says there's nothing wrong with me.

GALLIMARD. You see? Now, will you stop—?

HELGA. Rene, he says he'd like you to go in and take some tests.

GALLIMARD. Why? So he can find there's nothing wrong with both of us?

HELGA. Rene, I don't ask for much. One trip! One visit! And then, whatever you want to do about it—you decide.

GALLIMARD. You're assuming he'll find something defective!

HELGA. No! Of course not! Whatever he finds—if he finds nothing, we decide what to do about nothing! But go!

GALLIMARD. If he finds nothing, we keep trying. Just like we do now.

HELGA. But at least we'll know! (*Pause.*) I'm sorry. (*She starts to exit.*)

GALLIMARD. Do you really want me to see Dr. Bolleart?

HELGA. Only if you want a child, Rene. We have to face the fact that time is running out. Only if you want a child. (*She exits.*)

GALLIMARD. (*To Song.*) I'm a modern man, Butterfly. And yet, I don't want to go. It's the same old voodoo. I feel like God himself is laughing at me if I can't produce a child.

SONG. You men of the West—you're obsessed by your odd desire for equality. Your wife can't give you a child, and you're going to the doctor?

GALLIMARD. Well, you see, she's already gone.

SONG. And because this incompetent can't find the defect, you now have to subject yourself to him? It's unnatural.

GALLIMARD. Well, what is the "natural" solution?

SONG. In Imperial China, when a man found that one wife was inadequate, he turned to another—to give him his son.

GALLIMARD. What do you—? I can't . . . marry you, yet.

SONG. Please. I'm not asking you to be my husband. But I am already your wife.

GALLIMARD. Do you want to . . . have my child?

SONG. I thought you'd never ask.

GALLIMARD. But, your career . . . your—

SONG. Phooey on my career! That's your Western mind, twisting itself into strange shapes again. Of course I love my career. But what would I love most of all? To feel something inside me—day and night—something I know is yours.

(*Pause.*) Promise me . . . you won't go to this doctor. Who is this Western quack to set himself as judge over the man I love? I know who is a man, and who is not. (*She exits.*)

GALLIMARD. (*To us.*) Dr. Bolleart? Of course I didn't go. What man would?

SCENE 6

Beijing. 1963.

Party noises over the house speakers. Renee Enters, wearing a revealing gown.

GALLIMARD. 1963. A party at the Austrian embassy. None of us could remember the Austrian ambassador's name, which seemed somehow appropriate. (*To Renee.*) So, I tell the Americans, Diem must go. The U.S. wants to be respected by the Vietnamese, and yet they're propping up this nobody seminarian as her president. A man whose claim to fame is his sister-in-law imposing fanatic "moral order"

campaigns? Oriental women — when they're good, they're very good, but when they're bad, they're Christians.

RENEE. Yeah.

GALLIMARD. And what do you do?

RENEE. I'm a student. My father exports a lot of useless stuff to the Third World.

GALLIMARD. How useless?

RENEE. You know. Squirt guns, confectioner's sugar, hula hoops . . .

GALLIMARD. I'm sure they appreciate the sugar.

RENEE. I'm here for two years to study Chinese.

GALLIMARD. Two years!

RENEE. That's what everybody says.

GALLIMARD. When did you arrive?

RENEE. Three weeks ago.

GALLIMARD. And?

RENEE. I like it. It's primitive, but . . . well, this is the place to learn Chinese, so here I am.

GALLIMARD. Why Chinese?

RENEE. I think it'll be important someday.

GALLIMARD. You do?

RENEE. Don't ask me when, but . . . that's what I think.

GALLIMARD. Well, I agree with you. One hundred percent. That's very farsighted.

RENEE. Yeah. Well of course, my father thinks I'm a complete weirdo.

GALLIMARD. He'll thank you someday.

RENEE. Like when the Chinese start buying hula hoops?

GALLIMARD. There're a billion bellies out there.

RENEE. And if they end up taking over the world — well, then I'll be lucky to know Chinese too, right? *(Pause.)*

GALLIMARD. At this point, I don't see how the Chinese can possibly take —

RENEE. You know what I *don't* like about China?

GALLIMARD. Excuse me? No — what?

RENEE. Nothing to do at night.

GALLIMARD. You come to parties at embassies like everyone else.

RENEE. Yeah, but they get out at ten. And then what?

GALLIMARD. I'm afraid the Chinese idea of a dance hall is

a dirt floor and a man with a flute.

RENEE. Are you married?

GALLIMARD. Yes. Why?

RENEE. You wanna . . . fool around? *(Pause.)*

GALLIMARD. Sure.

RENEE. I'll wait for you outside. What's your name?

GALLIMARD. Gallimard. Rene.

RENEE. Weird. I'm Renee too. *(She exits.)*

GALLIMARD. *(To us.)* And so, I embarked on my first extra-extramarital affair. Renee was picture perfect. With a body like those girls in the magazines. If I put a tissue paper over my eyes, I wouldn't have been able to tell the difference. And it was exciting to be with someone who wasn't afraid to be seen completely naked. But is it possible for a woman to be *too* uninhibited, *too* willing, so as to seem almost too . . . masculine? *(Chuck Berry blares from the house speakers, then comes down in volume as Renee Enters, toweling her hair.)*

RENEE. You have a nice weenie.

GALLIMARD. What?

RENEE. Penis. You have a nice penis.

GALLIMARD. Oh. Well, thank you. That's very . . .

RENEE. What — can't take a compliment?

GALLIMARD. No, it's very . . . reassuring.

RENEE. But most girls don't come out and say it, huh?

GALLIMARD. And also . . . what did you call it?

RENEE. Oh. Most girls don't call it a "weenie," huh?

GALLIMARD. It sounds very —

RENEE. Small, I know.

GALLIMARD. I was going to say, "young."

RENEE. Yeah. Young, small, same thing. Most guys are pretty, uh, sensitive about that. Like, you know, I had a boyfriend back home in Denmark. I got mad at him once and called him a little weeniehead. He got so mad! He said at least I should call him a great big weeniehead.

GALLIMARD. I suppose I just say "penis."

RENEE. Yeah. That's pretty clinical. There's "cock," but that sounds like a chicken. And "prick" is painful, and "dick" is like you're talking about someone who's not in the room.

GALLIMARD. Yes. It's a . . . bigger problem than I imagined.

RENEE. I—I think maybe it's because I really don't know what to do with them—that's why I call them "weenies."

GALLIMARD. Well, you did quite well with . . . mine.

RENEE. Thanks, but I mean, really *do* with them. Like, okay, have you ever looked at one? I mean, really?

GALLIMARD. No, I suppose when it's part of you, you sort of take it for granted.

RENEE. I guess. But, like, it just hangs there. This little . . . flap of flesh. And there's so much fuss that we make about it. Like, I think the reason we fight wars is because we wear clothes. Because no one knows—between the men, I mean—who has the biggest . . . weenie. So, if I'm a guy with a small one, I'm going to build a really big building or take over a really big piece of land or write a really long book so the other men don't know, right? But, see, it never really works, that's the problem. I mean, you conquer the country, or whatever, but you're still wearing clothes, so there's no way to prove absolutely whose is bigger or smaller. And that's what we call a civilized society. The whole world run by a bunch of men with pricks the size of pins. *(She exits.)*

GALLIMARD. *(To us.)* This was simply not acceptable. *(A high-pitched chime rings through the air. Song, dressed as Butterfly, appears in the U.S. special. She is obviously distressed. Her body swoons as she attempts to clip the stems of flowers she's arranging in a vase.)* But I kept up our affair, wildly, for several months. Why? I believe because of Butterfly. She knew the secret I was trying to hide. But, unlike a Western woman, she didn't confront me, threaten, even pout. I remembered the words of Puccini's *Butterfly*:

SONG. "Noi siamo gente avvezze/ alle piccole cose/ umili e silenziose."

GALLIMARD. "I come from a people/ Who are accustomed to little/ Humble and silent." I saw Pinkerton and Butterfly, and what she would say if he were unfaithful . . . nothing. She would cry, alone, into those wildly soft sleeves, once full of possessions, now empty to collect her tears. It was her tears and her silence that excited me, every time I visited Renee.

TOULON. *(Offstage.)* Gallimard! *(Toulon enters. Gallimard turns towards him. During the next section, Song, U.S., begins to dance with the flowers. It is a drunken, reckless dance, where she breaks small pieces off the stems.)* They're killing him.

GALLIMARD. Who? I'm sorry? What?

TOULON. Bother you to come over at this late hour?

GALLIMARD. No . . . of course not.

TOULON. Not after you hear my secret. Champagne?

GALLIMARD. Um . . . thank you.

TOULON. You're surprised. There's something that you've wanted, Gallimard. No, not a promotion. Next time. Something in the world. You're not aware of this, but there's an informal gossip circle among intelligence agents. And some of ours heard from some of the Americans—

GALLIMARD. Yes?

TOULON. That the U.S. will allow the Vietnamese generals to stage a coup . . . and assassinate President Diem. *(The chime rings again. Toulon freezes. Gallimard turns U.S. and looks at Butterfly, who slowly and deliberately clips a flower off its stem. Gallimard turns back towards Toulon.)*

GALLIMARD. I think . . . that's a very wise move! *(Toulon unfreezes.)*

TOULON. It's what you've been advocating. A toast?

GALLIMARD. Sure. I consider this a vindication.

TOULON. Not exactly. "To the test. Let's hope you pass." *(They drink. The chime rings again. Toulon freezes. Gallimard turns U.S., and Song clips another flower.)*

GALLIMARD. *(To Toulon.)* The test?

TOULON. *(Unfreezing.)* It's a test of everything you've been saying. I personally think the generals probably will stop the Communists. And you'll be a hero. But if anything goes wrong, then your opinions won't be worth a pig's ear. I'm sure that won't happen. But sometimes it's easier when they don't listen to you.

GALLIMARD. They're your opinions too, aren't they?

TOULON. Personally, yes.

GALLIMARD. So we agree.

TOULON. But my opinions aren't on that report. Yours are. Cheers. *(Toulon turns away from Gallimard and raises his glass. At that instant Song picks up the vase and hurls it to the*

ground. It shatters. Song sinks down amidst the shards of the vase, in a calm, childlike trance. She sings softly, as if reciting a child's nursery rhyme.)

SONG. (Repeat as necessary.) "The whole world over, the white man travels, setting anchor, wherever he likes. Life's not worth living, unless he finds, the finest maidens, of every land . . . " (Gallimard turns D.S. towards us. Song continues singing.)

GALLIMARD. I shook as I left his house. That coward! That worm! To put the burden for his decisions on my shoulders!

I started for Renee's. But no, that was all I needed. A schoolgirl who would question the role of the penis in modern society. What I wanted was revenge. A vessel to contain my humiliation. Though I hadn't seen her in several weeks, I headed for Butterfly's. (Gallimard enters Song's apartment.)

SONG. Oh! Rene . . . I was dreaming!

GALLIMARD. You've been drinking?

SONG. If I can't sleep, then yes, I drink. But then, it gives me these dreams which—Rene, it's been almost three weeks since you visited me last.

GALLIMARD. I know. There's been a lot going on in the world.

SONG. Fortunately I am drunk. So I can speak freely. It's not the world, it's you and me. And an old problem. Even the softest skin becomes like leather to a man who's touched it too often. I confess I don't know how to stop it. I don't know how to become another woman.

GALLIMARD. I have a request.

SONG. Is this a solution? Or are you ready to give up the flat?

GALLIMARD. It may be a solution. But I'm sure you won't like it.

SONG. Oh well, that's very important. "Like it?" Do you think I "like" lying here alone, waiting, always waiting for your return? Please—don't worry about what I may not "like."

GALLIMARD. I want to see you . . . naked. (Silence.)

SONG. I thought you understood my modesty. So you want

me to—what—strip? Like a big cowboy girl? Shiny pasties on my breasts? Shall I fling my kimono over my head and yell "ya-hoo" in the process? I thought you respected my shame! GALLIMARD. I believe you gave me your shame many years ago.

SONG. Yes—and it is just like a white devil to use it against me. I can't believe it. I thought myself so repulsed by the passive Oriental and the cruel white man. Now I see—we are always most revolted by the things hidden within us.

GALLIMARD. I just mean—

SONG. Yes?

GALLIMARD. —that it will remove the only barrier left between us.

SONG. No, Rene. Don't couch your request in sweet words. Be yourself—a cad—and know that my love is enough, that I submit—submit to the worst you can give me. (Pause.) Well, come. Strip me. Whatever happens, know that you have willed it. Our love, in your hands. I'm helpless before my man. (Gallimard starts to cross the room.)

GALLIMARD. (To us.) Did I not undress her because I knew, somewhere deep down, what I would find? Perhaps. Happiness is so rare that our mind can turn somersaults to protect it.

At the time, I only knew that I was seeing Pinkerton stalking towards his Butterfly, ready to reward her love with his lecherous hands. The image sickened me, pulled me to my knees, so I was crawling towards her like a worm. By the time I reached her, Pinkerton . . . had vanished from my heart. To be replaced by something new, something unnatural, that flew in the face of all I'd learned in the world—something very close to love. (He grabs her around the waist; she strokes his hair.) Butterfly, forgive me.

SONG. Rene . . .

GALLIMARD. For everything. From the start.

Song. I'm . . .

GALLIMARD. I want to—

SONG. I'm pregnant. (Beat.) I'm pregnant. (Beat.) I'm pregnant. (Beat.)

GALLIMARD. I want to marry you!

SCENE 7

Gallimard and Butterfly's flat. Beijing. 1963.
Downstage, Song paces as Comrade Chin reads from her notepad. Upstage, Gallimard is still kneeling. He remains on his knees throughout the scene, watching it.

SONG. I need a baby.

CHIN. *(From pad.)* He's been spotted going to a dorm.

SONG. I need a baby.

CHIN. At the Foreign Language Institute.

SONG. I need a baby.

CHIN. The room of a Danish girl . . . What do you mean, you need a baby?!

SONG. Tell Comrade Kang — last night, the entire mission, it could've ended.

CHIN. What do you mean?

SONG. Tell Kang — he told me to strip.

CHIN. Strip?!

SONG. Write!

CHIN. I tell you, I don't understand nothing about this case anymore. Nothing.

SONG. He told me to strip, and I took a chance. Oh, we Chinese, we know how to gamble.

CHIN. *(Writing.)* “. . . told him to strip.”

SONG. My palms were wet, I had to make a split-second decision.

CHIN. Hey! Can you slow down?! *(Pause.)*

SONG. You write faster, I'm the artist here. Suddenly, it hit me — “All he wants is for her to submit. Once a woman submits, a man is always ready to become ‘generous.’”

CHIN. You're just gonna end up with rough notes.

SONG. And it worked! He gave in! Now, if I can just present him with a baby. A Chinese baby with blond hair — he'll be mine for life!

CHIN. Kang will never agree! The trading of babies has to be a counterrevolutionary act!

SONG. Sometimes, a counterrevolutionary act is necessary to counter a counterrevolutionary act. *(Pause.)*

CHIN. Wait.

SONG. I need one . . . in seven months. Make sure it's a boy.

CHIN. This doesn't sound like something the Chairman would do. Maybe you'd better talk to Comrade Kang yourself.

SONG. Good. I will. *(Chin gets up to leave.)* Miss Chin? Why, in the Peking Opera, are women's roles played by men?

CHIN. I don't know. Maybe, a reactionary remnant of male —

SONG. No. *(Beat.)* Because only a man knows how a woman is supposed to act. *(Chin exits. Song turns U.S., towards Gallimard.)*

GALLIMARD. *(Calling after Chin.)* Good riddance! *(To song.)*

I could forget all that betrayal in an instant, you know. If you'd just come back and become Butterfly again.

SONG. Fat chance. You're here in prison, rotting in a cell. And I'm on a plane, winging my way back to China. Your President pardoned me of our treason, you know.

GALLIMARD. Yes, I read about that.

SONG. Must make you feel . . . lower than shit.

GALLIMARD. But don't you, even a little bit, wish you were here with me?

SONG. I'm an artist, Rene. You were my greatest . . . acting challenge. *(She laughs.)* It doesn't matter how rotten I answer, does it? You still adore me. That's why I love you, Rene. *(She points to us.)* So — you were telling your audience about the night I announced I was pregnant. *(Gallimard puts his arms around Song's waist. He and Song are in the positions they were in at the end of Scene 6.)*

SCENE 8

Same.

GALLIMARD. I'll divorce my wife. We'll live together here, and then later in France.

SONG. I feel so . . . ashamed.

GALLIMARD. Why?
 SONG. I had begun to lose faith. And now, you shame me with your generosity.
 GALLIMARD. Generosity? No, I'm proposing for very selfish reasons.
 SONG. Your apologies only make me feel more ashamed. My outburst a moment ago!
 GALLIMARD. Your outburst? What about my request?
 SONG. You've been very patient dealing with my . . . eccentricities. A Western man, used to women freer with their bodies—
 GALLIMARD. It was sick! Don't make excuses for me.
 SONG. I have to. You don't seem willing to make them for yourself. *(Pause.)*
 GALLIMARD. You're crazy.
 SONG. I'm happy. Which often looks like crazy.
 GALLIMARD. Then make me crazy. Marry me. *(Pause.)*
 SONG. No.
 GALLIMARD. What?
 SONG. Do I sound silly, a slave, if I say I'm not worthy?
 GALLIMARD. Yes. In fact you do. No one has loved me like you.
 SONG. Thank you. And no one ever will. I'll see to that.
 GALLIMARD. So what is the problem?
 SONG. Rene, we Chinese are realists. We understand rice, gold, and guns. You are a diplomat. Your career is skyrocketing. Now, what would happen if you divorced your wife to marry a Communist Chinese actress?
 GALLIMARD. That's not being realistic. That's defeating yourself before you begin.
 SONG. We must conserve our strength for the battles we can win.
 GALLIMARD. That sounds like a fortune cookie!
 SONG. Where do you think fortune cookies come from?
 GALLIMARD. I don't care.
 SONG. You do. So do I. And we should. That is why I say I'm not worthy. I'm worthy to love and even to be loved by you. But I am not worthy to end the career of one of the West's most promising diplomats.

GALLIMARD. It's not that great a career! I made it sound like more than it is!
 SONG. Modesty will get you nowhere. Flatter yourself, and you flatter me. I'm flattered to decline your offer. *(She exits.)*
 GALLIMARD. *(To us.)* Butterfly and I argued all night. And, in the end, I left, knowing I would never be her husband. She went away for several months—to the countryside, like a small animal. Until the night I received her call. *(A baby's cry from O.S. Song enters, carrying a child.)*
 SONG. He looks like you.
 GALLIMARD. Oh! *(Beat; he approaches the baby.)* Well, babies are never very attractive at birth.
 SONG. Stop!
 GALLIMARD. I'm sure he'll grow more beautiful with age. More like his mother.
 SONG. "Chi vide mai/ a bimbo del Giappone . . ."
 GALLIMARD. "What baby, I wonder, was ever born in Japan"—or China, for that matter—
 SONG. ". . . occhi azzurrini?"
 GALLIMARD. "With azure eyes"—they're actually sort of brown, wouldn't you say?
 SONG. "E il labbro."
 GALLIMARD. "And such lips!" *(He kisses Song.)* And such lips.
 SONG. "E i ricciolini d'oro schietto?"
 GALLIMARD. "And such a head of golden"—if slightly patchy—"curls?"
 SONG. I'm going to call him "Peepee."
 GALLIMARD. Darling, could you repeat that because I'm sure a rickshaw just flew by overhead.
 SONG. You heard me.
 GALLIMARD. "Song Peepee"? May I suggest Michael, or Stephan, or Adolph?
 SONG. You may, but I won't listen.
 GALLIMARD. You can't be serious. Can you imagine the time this child will have in school?
 SONG. In the West, yes.
 GALLIMARD. It's worse than naming him Ping Pong or Long Dong or—

SONG. But he's never going to live in the West, is he?
(Pause.)

GALLIMARD. That wasn't my choice.

SONG. It is mine. And this is my promise to you: I will raise him, he will be our child, but he will never burden you outside of China.

GALLIMARD. Why do you make these promises? I want to be burdened! I want a scandal to cover the papers!

SONG. (To us.) Prophetic.

GALLIMARD. I'm serious.

SONG. So am I. His name is as I registered it. And he will never live in the West. (Song exits with the child.)

GALLIMARD. (To us.) It is possible that her stubbornness only made me want her more. That drawing back at the moment of my capitulation was the most brilliant strategy she could have chosen. It is possible. But it is also possible that by this point she could have said, could have done . . . anything, and I would have adored her still.

SCENE 9

Beijing. 1966.

A driving rhythm of Chinese percussion fills the stage.

GALLIMARD. And then, China began to change. Mao became very old, and his cult became very strong. And, like many old men, he entered his second childhood. So he handed over the reins of state to those with minds like his own. And children ruled the Middle Kingdom with complete caprice. The doctrine of the Cultural Revolution implied continuous anarchy. Contact between Chinese and foreigners became impossible. Our flat was confiscated. Her fame and my money now counted against us. (Two dancers in Mao suits and red-starred caps enter, and begin crudely mimicking revolutionary violence, in an agitprop fashion.) And somehow the American war went wrong too. Four hundred thousand dollars were being spent for every Viet Cong killed; so General Westmoreland's remark that the Oriental does not value life the way Americans do was oddly accurate. Why weren't the Vietnamese people giving in? Why were they

content instead to die and die and die again? (Toulon enters. Percussion and dancers continue U.S.)

TOULON. Congratulations, Gallimard.

GALLIMARD. Excuse me, sir?

TOULON. Not a promotion. That was last time. You're going home.

GALLIMARD. What?

TOULON. Don't say I didn't warn you.

GALLIMARD. I'm being transferred . . . because I was wrong about the American war?

TOULON. Of course not. We don't care about the Americans. We care about your mind. The quality of your analysis. In general, everything you've predicted here in the Orient . . . just hasn't happened.

GALLIMARD. I think that's premature.

TOULON. Don't force me to be blunt. Okay, you said China was ready to open to Western trade. The only thing they're trading out there are Western heads. And, yes, you said the Americans would succeed in Indochina. You were kidding, right?

GALLIMARD. I think the end is in sight.

TOULON. Don't be pathetic. And don't take this personally. You were wrong. It's not your fault.

GALLIMARD. But I'm going home.

TOULON. Right. Could I have the number of your mistress? (Beat.) Joke! Joke! Eat a croissant for me. (Toulon exits. Song, wearing a Mao suit, is dragged in from the wings as part of the U.S. dance. They "beat" her, then lampoon the acrobatics of the Chinese opera, as she is made to kneel onstage.)

GALLIMARD. (Simultaneously.) I don't care to recall how Butterfly and I said our hurried farewell. Perhaps it was better to end our affair before it killed her. (Gallimard Exits. Percussion rises in volume. The lampooning becomes faster, more frenetic. At its height, Comrade Chin walks across the stage with a banner reading: "The Actor Renounces His Decadent Profession!" She reaches the kneeling Song. At the moment Chin touches Song's chin, percussion stops with a thud. Dancers strike poses.)

CHIN. Actor-oppressor, for years you have lived above the common people and looked down on their labor. While the farmer ate millet—

SONG. I ate pastries from France and sweetmeats from silver trays.

CHIN. And how did you come to live in such an exalted position?

SONG. I was a plaything for the imperialists!

CHIN. What did you do?

SONG. I shamed China by allowing myself to be corrupted by a foreigner . . .

CHIN. What does this mean? The People demand a full confession!

SONG. I engaged in the lowest perversions with China's enemies!

CHIN. What perversions? Be more clear!

SONG. I let him put it up my ass! (*Dancers look over, disgusted.*)

CHIN. Aaaa-ya! How can you use such sickening language?!

SONG. My language . . . is only as foul as the crimes I committed . . .

CHIN. Yeah. That's better. So—what do you want to do . . . now?

SONG. I want to serve the people. (*Percussion starts up, with Chinese strings.*)

CHIN. What?

SONG. I want to serve the people! (*Dancers regain their revolutionary smiles, and begin a dance of victory.*)

CHIN. What?!

SONG. I want to serve the people!! (*Dancers unveil a banner: "The Actor is Re-Habilitated!" Song remains kneeling before Chin, as the dancers bounce around them, then Exit. Music out.*)

SCENE 10

A commune. Hunan Province. 1970.

CHIN. How you planning to do that?

SONG. I've already worked four years in the fields of Hunan, Comrade Chin.

CHIN. So? Farmers work all their lives. Let me see your

hands. (*Song holds them out for her inspection.*) Goddamnl Still so smooth! How long does it take to turn you actors into good anythings? Hunh. You've just spent too many years in luxury to be any good to the Revolution.

SONG. I served the Revolution.

CHIN. Serve the Revolution? Bullshit! You wore dresses! Don't tell me—I was there. I saw you! You and your white vice-consul! Stuck up there in your flat, living off the People's Treasury! Yeah, I knew what was going on! You two . . . homos! Homos! Homos! (*Pause; she composes herself.*) Ah! Well . . . you will serve the people, all right. But not with the Revolution's money. This time, you use your own money.

SONG. I have no money.

CHIN. Shut up! And you won't stink up China anymore with your pervert stuff. You'll pollute the place where pollution begins—the West.

SONG. What do you mean?

CHIN. Shut up! You're going to France. Without a cent in your pocket. You find your consul's house, you make him pay your expenses—

SONG. No.

CHIN. And you give us weekly reports! Useful information!

SONG. That's crazy. It's been four years.

CHIN. Either that, or back to rehabilitation center!

SONG. Comrade Chin, he's not going to support me! Not in France! He's a white man! I was just his plaything—

CHIN. Oh yuck! Again with the sickening language? Where's my stick?

SONG. You don't understand the mind of a man. (*Pause.*)

CHIN. Oh no? No I don't? Then how come I'm married, huh? How come I got a man? Five, six years ago, you always tell me those kind of things, I felt very bad. But not now! Because what does the Chairman say? He tells us I'm now the smart one, you're now the nincompoop! You're the block-head, the harebrain, the nitwit! You think you're so smart? You understand "The Mind of a Man"? Good! Then you go to France and be a pervert for Chairman Mao! (*Chin and Song exit in opposite directions.*)

Paris. 1968–70.
Gallimard Enters.

GALLIMARD. And what was waiting for me back in Paris? Well, better Chinese food than I'd eaten in China. Friends and relatives. A little accounting, regular schedule, keeping track of traffic violations in the suburbs. . . . And the indignity of students shouting the slogans of Chairman Mao at me—in French.

HELGA. Rene? Rene? *(She enters, soaking wet.)* I've had a . . . problem. *(She sneezes.)*

GALLIMARD. You're wet.

HELGA. Yes, I . . . coming back from the grocer's. A group of students, waving red flags, they— *(Gallimard fetches a towel.)*—they ran by, I was caught up along with them. Before I knew what was happening— *(Gallimard gives her the towel.)* Thank you. The police started firing water cannons at us. I tried to shout, to tell them I was the wife of a diplomat, but—you know how it is . . . *(Pause.)* Needless to say, I lost the groceries. Rene, what's happening to France?

GALLIMARD. What's—? Well, nothing, really.

HELGA. Nothing?! The storefronts are in flames, there's glass in the streets, buildings are toppling—and I'm wet!

GALLIMARD. Nothing! . . . that I care to think about.

HELGA. And is that why you stay in this room?

GALLIMARD. Yes, in fact.

HELGA. With the incense burning? You know something? I hate incense. It smells so sickly sweet.

GALLIMARD. Well, I hate the French. Who just smell—period!

HELGA. And the Chinese were better?

GALLIMARD. Please—don't start.

HELGA. When we left, this exact same thing, the riots—

GALLIMARD. No, no . . .

HELGA. Students screaming slogans, smashing down doors—

GALLIMARD. Helga—

HELGA. It was going on in China, too. Don't you remember?!

GALLIMARD. Helga! Please! *(pause)* You have never understood China, have you? You walk in here with these ridiculous ideas, that the West is falling apart, that China was spitting in our faces. You come in, dripping of the streets, and you leave water all over my floor. *(He grabs Helga's towel, begins mopping up the floor.)*

HELGA. But it's the truth!

GALLIMARD. Helga, I want a divorce. *(Pause; Gallimard continues mopping the floor.)*

HELGA. I take it back. China is . . . beautiful. Incense, I like incense.

GALLIMARD. I've had a mistress.

HELGA. So?

GALLIMARD. For eight years.

HELGA. I knew you would. I knew you would the day I married you. And now what? You want to marry her?

GALLIMARD. I can't. She's in China.

HELGA. I see. You know that no one else is ever going to marry me, right?

GALLIMARD. I'm sorry.

HELGA. And you want to leave. For someone who's not here, is that right?

GALLIMARD. That's right.

HELGA. You can't live with her, but still you don't want to live with me.

GALLIMARD. That's right. *(Pause.)*

HELGA. Shit. How terrible that I can figure that out. *(Pause.)* I never thought I'd say it. But, in China, I was happy. I knew, in my own way, I knew that you were not everything you pretended to be. But the pretense—going on your arm to the embassy ball, visiting your office and the guards saying, "Good morning, good morning, Madame Gallimard"—the pretense . . . was very good indeed. *(Pause.)* I hope everyone is mean to you for the rest of your life. *(She exits.)*

GALLIMARD. *(To us.)* Prophetic. *(Marc enters with two drinks; to Marc.)* In China, I was different from all other men.

MARC. Sure. You were white. Here's your drink.
 GALLIMARD. I felt . . . touched.
 MARC. In the head? Rene, I don't want to hear about the Oriental love goddess. Okay? One night — can we just drink and throw up without a lot of conversation?
 GALLIMARD. You still don't believe me, do you?
 MARC. Sure I do. She was the most beautiful, et cetera, et cetera, blasé, blasé. (*Pause.*)
 GALLIMARD. My life in the West has been such a disappointment.
 MARC. Life in the West is like that. You'll get used to it. Look, you're driving me away. I'm leaving. Happy, now? Look, I have a date tomorrow night. You wanna come? I can fix you up with —
 GALLIMARD. Of course. I would love to come. (*Pause.*)
 MARC. Uh — on second thought, no. You'd better get ahold of yourself first. (*He exits; Gallimard nurses his drink.*)
 GALLIMARD. (*To us.*) This is the ultimate cruelty, isn't it? That I can talk and talk and to anyone listening, it's only air — too rich a diet to be swallowed by a mundane world. Why can't anyone understand? That in China, I once loved, and was loved by, very simply, the Perfect Woman. (*Song enters, dressed as Butterfly in wedding kimono. To Song.*) Not again. My imagination is hell. Am I asleep this time? Or did I drink too much?
 SONG. Rene?
 GALLIMARD. God, it's too painful! That you speak?
 SONG. What are you talking about? Rene — touch me.
 GALLIMARD. Why?
 SONG. I'm real. Take my hand.
 GALLIMARD. Why? So you can disappear again and leave me clutching at the air? For the entertainment of my neighbors who —? (*Song touches Gallimard.*)
 SONG. Rene? (*Gallimard takes Song's hand. Silence.*)
 GALLIMARD. Butterfly? I never doubted you'd return.
 SONG. You hadn't . . . forgotten —?
 GALLIMARD. Yes, actually, I've forgotten everything. My mind, you see — there wasn't enough room in this hard head — not for the world *and* for you. No, there was only room for one. (*Beat.*) Come, look. See? Your bed has been

waiting, with the Klimt poster you like, and — see? The xiang lu [incense burner] you gave me?
 SONG. I . . . I don't know what to say.
 GALLIMARD. There's nothing to say. Not at the end of a long trip. Can I make you some tea?
 SONG. But where's your wife?
 GALLIMARD. She's by my side. She's by my side at last. (*Gallimard reaches to embrace Song. Song sidesteps, dodging him.*) Why?!
 SONG. (*To us.*) So I did return to Renee in Paris. Where I found —
 GALLIMARD. Why do you run away? Can't we show them how we embraced that evening?
 SONG. Please. I'm talking.
 GALLIMARD. You have to do what I say! I'm conjuring you up in my mind!
 SONG. Rene, I've never done what you've said. Why should it be any different in your mind? Now split — the story moves on, and I must change.
 GALLIMARD. I welcomed you into my home! I didn't have to, you know! I could've left you penniless on the streets of Paris! But I took you in!
 SONG. Thank you.
 GALLIMARD. So . . . please . . . don't change.
 SONG. You know I have to. You know I will. And anyway, what difference does it make? No matter what your eyes tell you, you can't ignore the truth. You already know too much. (*Gallimard exits. Song turns to us.*) The change I'm going to make requires about five minutes. So I thought you might want to take this opportunity to stretch your legs, enjoy a drink, or listen to the musicians. I'll be here, when you return, right where you left me. (*Song goes to a mirror in front of which is a wash basin of water. She starts to remove her makeup as stagelights go to half and houselights come up.*)

ACT THREE

SCENE 1

A courthouse in Paris. 1986.

As he promised, Song has completed the bulk of his transformation onstage by the time the houselights go down and the stagelights come up full. He removes his wig and kimono, leaving them on the floor. Underneath, he wears a well-cut suit.

SONG. So I'd done my job better than I had a right to expect. Well, give him some credit, too. He's right — I was in a fix when I arrived in Paris. I walked from the airport into town, then I located, by blind groping, the Chinatown district. Let me make one thing clear: whatever else may be said about the Chinese, they are stingy! I slept in doorways three days until I could find a tailor who would make me this kimono on credit. As it turns out, maybe I didn't even need it. Maybe he would've been happy to see me in a simple shift and mascara. But . . . better safe than sorry.

That was 1970, when I arrived in Paris. For the next fifteen years, yes, I lived a very comfy life. Some relief, believe me, after four years on a fucking commune in Nowheresville, China. Rene supported the boy and me, and I did some demonstrations around the country as part of my "cultural exchange" cover. And then there was the spying. *(Song moves U.S., to a chair. Toulon enters as a judge, wearing the appropriate wig and robes. He sits near Song. It's 1986, and Song is testifying in a courtroom.)* Not much at first. Rene had lost all his high-level contacts. Comrade Chin wasn't very interested in parking-ticket statistics. But finally, at my urging, Rene got a job as a courier, handling sensitive documents. He'd photograph them for me, and I'd pass them on to the Chinese embassy.

JUDGE. Did he understand the extent of his activity?

SONG. He didn't ask. He knew that I needed those documents, and that was enough.

JUDGE. But he must've known he was passing classified information.

SONG. I can't say.

JUDGE. He never asked what you were going to do with them?

SONG. Nope. *(Pause.)*

JUDGE. There is one thing that the court — indeed, that all of France — would like to know.

SONG. Fire away.

JUDGE. Did Monsieur Gallimard know you were a man?

SONG. Well, he never saw me completely naked. Ever.

JUDGE. But surely, he must've . . . how can I put this?

SONG. Put it however you like. I'm not shy. He must've felt around?

JUDGE. Mmmmm.

SONG. Not really. I did all the work. He just laid back. Of course we did enjoy more . . . complete union, and I suppose he *might* have wondered why I was always on my stomach, but. . . . But what you're thinking is, "Of course a wrist must've brushed . . . a hand hit . . . over twenty years!" Yeah. Well, Your Honor, it was my job to make him think I was a woman. And chew on this: it wasn't all that hard. See, my mother was a prostitute along the Bundt before the Revolution. And, uh, I think it's fair to say she learned a few things about Western men. So I borrowed her knowledge. In service to my country.

JUDGE. Would you care to enlighten the court with this secret knowledge? I'm sure we're all very curious.

SONG. I'm sure you are. *(Pause.)* Okay, Rule One is: Men always believe what they want to hear. So a girl can tell the most obnoxious lies and the guys will believe them every time — "This is my first time" — "That's the biggest I've ever seen" — or *both*, which, if you really think about it, is not possible in a single lifetime. You've maybe heard those phrases a few times in your own life, yes, Your Honor?

JUDGE. It's not my life, Monsieur Song, which is on trial today.

SONG. Okay, okay, just trying to lighten up the proceedings. Tough room.

JUDGE. Go on.

SONG. Rule Two: As soon as a Western man comes into contact with the East—he's already confused. The West has sort of an international rape mentality towards the East. Do you know rape mentality?

JUDGE. Give us your definition, please.

SONG. Basically, "Her mouth says no, but her eyes say yes." The West thinks of itself as masculine—big guns, big industry, big money—so the East is feminine—weak, delicate, poor... but good at art, and full of inscrutable wisdom—the feminine mystique. Her mouth says no, but her eyes say yes. The West believes the East, deep down, *wants* to be dominated—because a woman can't think for herself.

JUDGE. What does this have to do with my question?

SONG. You expect Oriental countries to submit to your guns, and you expect Oriental women to be submissive to your men. That's why you say they make the best wives.

JUDGE. But why would that make it possible for you to fool Monsieur Gallimard? Please—get to the point.

SONG. One, because when he finally met his fantasy woman, he wanted more than anything to believe that she was, in fact, a woman. And second, I am an Oriental. And being an Oriental, I could never be completely a man. *(Pause.)*

JUDGE. Your armchair political theory is tenuous, Monsieur Song.

SONG. You think so? That's why you'll lose in all your dealings with the East.

JUDGE. Just answer my question: did he know you were a man? *(Pause.)*

SONG. You know, Your Honor, I never asked.

SCENE 2

Same.

Music from the "Death Scene" from Butterfly blares over the house speakers. It is the loudest thing we've heard in this play.

Gallimard Enters, crawling towards Song's wig and kimono.

GALLIMARD. Butterfly? Butterfly? *(Song remains a man, in the witness box, delivering a testimony we do not hear. To us.)* In my moment of greatest shame, here, in this courtroom—with that . . . person up there, telling the world. . . . What strikes me especially is how shallow he is, how glib and obsequious . . . completely . . . without substance! The type that prowls around discos with a gold medallion stinking of garlic. So little like my Butterfly.

Yet even in this moment my mind remains agile, flip-flopping like a man on a trampoline. Even now, my picture dissolves, and I see that . . . witness . . . talking to me. *(Song suddenly stands straight up in his witness box, and looks at Gallimard.)*

SONG. Yes. You. White man. *(Song steps out of the witness box, and moves D.S. towards Gallimard. Light change.)*

GALLIMARD. *(To Song.)* Who? Me?

SONG. Do you see any other white men?

GALLIMARD. Yes. There're white men all around. This is a French courtroom.

SONG. So you are an adventurous imperialist. Tell me, why did it take you so long? To come back to this place?

GALLIMARD. What place?

SONG. This theatre in China. Where we met many years ago.

GALLIMARD. *(To us.)* And once again, against my will, I am transported. *(Chinese opera music comes up on the speakers. Song begins to do opera moves, as he did the night they met.)*

SONG. Do you remember? The night you gave your heart?

GALLIMARD. It was a long time ago.

SONG. Not long enough. A night that turned your world upside down.

GALLIMARD. Perhaps.

SONG. Oh, be honest with me. What's another bit of flattery when you've already given me twenty years' worth? It's a wonder my head hasn't swollen to the size of China.

GALLIMARD. Who's to say it hasn't?

SONG. Who's to say? And what's the shame? In pride? You think I could've pulled this off if I wasn't already full of pride when we met? No, not just pride. Arrogance. It takes arrogance, really—to believe you can will, with your eyes and your lips, the destiny of another. (*He dances.*) C'mon. Admit it. You still want me. Even in slacks and a button-down collar. GALLIMARD. I don't see what the point of—

SONG. You don't? Well maybe, Rene, just maybe—I want you.

GALLIMARD. You do?

SONG. Then again, maybe I'm just playing with you. How can you tell? (*Reprising his feminine character, he sidles up to Gallimard.*) "How I wish there were even a small cafe to sit in. With men in tuxedos, and cappuccinos, and bad expatriate jazz." Now you want to kiss me, don't you?

GALLIMARD. (*Pulling away.*) What makes you—?

SONG. —so sure? See? I take the words from your mouth. Then I wait for you to come and retrieve them. (*He reclines on the floor.*)

GALLIMARD. Why?! Why do you treat me so cruelly?

SONG. Perhaps I *was* treating you cruelly. But now—I'm being nice. Come here, my little one.

GALLIMARD. I'm not your little one!

SONG. My mistake. It's I who am *your* little one, right?

GALLIMARD. Yes, I—

SONG. So come get your little one. If you like, I may even let you strip me.

GALLIMARD. I mean, you were! Before . . . but not like this!

SONG. I was? Then perhaps I still am. If you look hard enough. (*He starts to remove his clothes.*)

GALLIMARD. What—what are you doing?

SONG. Helping you to see through my act.

GALLIMARD. Stop that! I don't want to! I don't—

SONG. Oh, but you asked me to strip, remember?

GALLIMARD. What? That was years ago! And I took it back!

SONG. No. You postponed it. Postponed the inevitable. Today, the inevitable has come calling. (*From the speakers, cacophony: Butterfly mixed in with Chinese gongs.*)

GALLIMARD. No! Stop! I don't want to see!

SONG. Then look away.

GALLIMARD. You're only in my mind! All this is in my mind! I order you! To stop!

SONG. To what? To strip? That's just what I'm—

GALLIMARD. No! Stop! I want you—!

SONG. You want me?

GALLIMARD. To stop!

SONG. You know something, Rene? Your mouth says no, but your eyes say yes. Turn them away. I dare you.

GALLIMARD. I don't have to! Every night, you say you're going to strip, but then I beg you and you stop!

SONG. I guess tonight is different.

GALLIMARD. Why? Why should that be?

SONG. Maybe I've become frustrated. Maybe I'm saying "Look at me, you fool!" Or maybe I'm just feeling . . . sexy. (*He is down to his briefs.*)

GALLIMARD. Please. This is unnecessary. I know what you are.

SONG. You do? What am I?

GALLIMARD. A—a man.

SONG. You don't really believe that.

GALLIMARD. Yes I do! I knew all the time somewhere that my happiness was temporary, my love a deception. But my mind kept the knowledge at bay. To make the wait bearable.

SONG. Monsieur Gallimard—the wait is over. (*Song drops his briefs. He is naked. Sound cue out. Slowly, we and Song come to the realization that what we had thought to be Gallimard's sobbing is actually his laughter.*)

GALLIMARD. Oh god! What an idiot! Of course!

SONG. Rene—what?

GALLIMARD. Look at you! You're a man! (*He bursts into laughter again.*)

SONG. I fail to see what's so funny!

GALLIMARD. "You fail to see—I!" I mean, you never did have much of a sense of humor, did you? I just think it's ridiculously funny that I've wasted so much time on just a man!

SONG. Wait. I'm not "just a man."