

Gotanda Art Plant.
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1 DREAM OF CHANG AND ENG

By Philip Kan Gotanda

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joeozu@aol.com philipkangotanda.com

A DREAM OF CHANG AND ENG is a fictional reimagining of the lives of Chang and Eng Bunker.

The lives of Chang and Eng are the stuff of legend. Born as conjoined twins in Siam in the early 1800's, they were brought to America to be exhibited as "freaks." They soon took over their own business affairs and successfully toured themselves around the world. Famous, wealthy, they retired in their early 30's to North Carolina to become Gentleman Farmers. They met and married the daughters of a well-to-do landowner, the Yates sisters, and between them all, begat 21 children. They maintained two separate households, each with a bed that could hold three persons. Chang and Eng lived into their early 60's, by which time they disliked each other intensely. They did one final tour to recoup losses from the Civil War. Chang died first, followed a few hours later by Eng. Today, the many descendants of Chang and Eng Bunker proudly gather to celebrate their famous ancestors.

The historical backdrop of their story is equally fascinating. During their lives, America moves into industrialization, hungry innocents flood in from farms to burgeoning cities, immigration from new sources like China begins, and the nation's legal systems attempt to deal with the potential threat to racial purity that their presence poses. In the turbulent zeitgeist of antebellum America, the new nation *looks* at Chang and Eng and sees in them something it needs. They become world famous. The term "Siamese Twins" comes from their story.

- Philip Kan Gotanda -

Chang & Eng: At times they play separate from each other as if two distinct physical persons. Other times, in particular with other characters, they play physically connected, as they were in real life.

The choice to have them physically separate in scenes is to allow us to theatrically experience each brother's distinct individual self. It is not to show them wanting to be "normal" or them desiring such.

Shared nuanced gestures hint at their conjoinedness. As they pass they might momentarily retard as if in slow motion, then continue at normal speed. A hand gesture or head tilt by one brother is simultaneously mirrored by the other as if an unseen communication were being shared.

They have a physical and psychic synchronicity. At times they appear to know and anticipate what the other will be doing or thinking.

They have developed their own gestural behaviors and emotional expressions. They do a "Hand-Dance". They "knock heads". Or something as simple as swaying-rocking their bodies to convey a method of dealing with stress.

A specific movement vocabulary is an integral part of this play. Scenes as the horse

taming, the tandem double cutting, the swimming race, should be staged with that in mind.

CHARACTERS – All actors play multiple roles except Chang and Eng. E.g., the same actor would play Elizabeth Monroe, Afong Moy and Mother Yates. Minimum Cast Size – 10 players. ***

ENG BUNKER - Reserved, introspective. More of the businessman and intellectual of the twin brothers.

CHANG BUNKER – Outgoing, feisty. More volatile and physically stronger of the twin brothers.

KATHERINE-JOSEPHINE BUNKER – Lovely, delicate. Bi-racial daughter of Chang and Addie. She *sings*.

PHINEAS T. BARNUM – The impresario himself. Flamboyant, bigger than life.

ADDIE YATES – Adelaide. The younger of the Yates sisters married to Chang. Pretty, flirtatious, enjoys life.

SALLIE YATES - Sarah Ann. The older Yates sister married to Eng. Quiet, plain, not as confident as Addie but more willful.

ELIZABETH MONROE – Eccentric English upper class lady, a feminine dressing George Sand.

AFONG MOY – Female Chinese Performer at Barnum’s Great American Museum. Beautiful, embittered, bound feet.

LEARNED JACK – Free Black Sailor on the English ship Schem.

GOOD JOHN – American Sailor on the Schem. Lover to Learned Jack.

CAPTAIN ROBERT HUNTER – English Trader of Scottish origins who *discovered* Chang and Eng.

SUSAN COFFIN – Co-owner of Chang and Eng’s employment contract.

ABEL COFFIN – Co-owner of Chang and Eng’s employment contract.

The HORSE -- The Horse, of course.

I Dream of Chang and Eng

London. 1869. The Farewell Tour --

Darkness. Big Drum roll. The Band plays. Explosion of flash powder. A cloud of oily theater smoke. FREAKS dance. A HORSE canters around the perimeter--

PT BARNUM lit with a large megaphone --

Barnum: More extraordinary than the Giant of Cardiff! More amazing than the Great Pyramids of Egypt! The 8th Wonder of the new world, ladies and gentlemen, after twenty five long years away, welcome back your old friends, Chang and Eng!

CHANG and ENG revealed. Wave with grand gesture.

Chang & Eng: Hello London! It has been a long, long time for us, too!

Barnum: Welcome to 'Phineas T. Barnum Presents Chang and Eng - The 1869 Old Friends Tour!'

Chang and Eng wave. The crowd roars. Chang and Eng smile broadly at each other. Music. Freaks. Confetti. The Horse.

Dim to darkness.

After the show. Chang and Eng with PT Barnum and Chang's *bi-racial* daughter, KATHERINE-JOSEPHINE. She is attractive, well-dressed and mannered of the age.

An intense dislike is evident between the Brothers.

Katherine-Josephine helps Chang and Eng out of their clothes --

Katherine-Josephine: Easy, father...

Chang: PT? Tell Eng, I am hungry and would like to eat.

Barnum: This is silly Gentleman --

Chang: PT?

Barnum: Eng? Chang is hungry and would like to eat.

Eng: Phineas, tell Chang my bladder is full and I need to relieve myself.

Barnum: Chang? Eng's bladder is full and needs to relieve himself.

Chang: Tell Eng his breath smells of whiskey --

Eng: Tell him I will beat him good if he keeps with his insults --

-- almost to blows --

Katherine-Josephine: Uncle? Papa?

Barnum: You talk some sense into them, I must see to the box office.

Katherine-Josephine: Your fears were unfounded. They remember you and still love you.

Eng: Phineas?

Barnum: The tallies will be delivered to your room.

Barnum exits.

Katherine-Josephine: I am very tired. (kisses Chang) Goodnight Father. (kisses Eng) Goodnight Uncle Eng.

Chang: When we reach Vienna, we see Dr. Coudert.

Katherine-Josephine: I do not see the point.

Chang: He is a specialist. He will heal you.

Katherine-Josephine: You two should talk, you might find you like each other.

Katherine-Josephine exits.

Chang bows his head, closes his eyes and quietly prays.

Eng moves away and studies Chang. He straightens Chang's clothing, pushes his hair in place.

Eng: 'He that is thy friend indeed
He will help thee in thy need
If thou sorrow, he will weep
If thou wake, he cannot sleep

Thus of every grief in heart
He with thee does bear a part' ...

Beat.

Eng: I wish you were dead. Only then I would be, too. 'Ay, there's the rub.'

Katherine-Josephine Bunker lights an *Oil Lamp* --

Katherine-Josephine: 1820. Samutskram, Siam. 49 years earlier. Cholera.

DR. CHAMBERLAIN played by PT Barnum.

Dr. Chamberlain: -- an acute infectious disease caused by a bacterium, vibrio cholerae, characterized by explosive watery diarrhea sometimes called "rice water stools" because of the likeness to water that has been used to wash rice. Extreme dehydration sets in --

Eng: The King orders the Royal Canon to fire through the night. All his subjects to chant the *atanatiya sutra* --

The MOTHER, Nok, brings a gourd of water. Attends and comforts the fevered Chang and Eng.

Mother: Drink...

Chang and Eng drink greedily --

The FATHER, Nik, breaks in grabbing the delirious boys --

Mother: Papa?

Father: It is better this way.

Mother: No --

Lighting shift. The Mae Klong River.

Father, with his fishing partner, LIM, and Chang and Eng.

Lim: (covering his nose) The stink... Maybe we should wait.

Father: They should never have been born.

Father and Lim push Chang and Eng --

Katherine-Josephine: They are thrown off the banks –

Chang & Eng: Ahhh!!!

Katherine-Josephine: They crash through the waters --

Under Water. Lights shift to a dark blue-green hue. Sound shift --

Katherine-Josephine: They cannot breathe. Eng panics, claws at Chang. He is pulling Chang under --

Chang pretends to die, goes limp. Eng lets go, struggles on his own --

Katherine-Josephine: Chang waits until --

Eng runs out of air, goes limp. Chang grabs him --

Katherine-Josephine: They break the surface, Chang drags Eng through *thick clumps of weeds* to the shallows--

Chang turns Eng over and pounds his back to clear his lungs. He blows into Eng. Nothing. Chang frantically inhales again, blows air in --

Eng: (gasping) 'Ahhh!'

-- Eng spews water and gulps air --

Chang and Eng hug tightly, both shivering.

Chang: Papa tried to drown us.

Eng: He did not want our sickness to spread to the other children --

Chang: He tried to drown us.

No response.

Chang: If I die, how will you find me?

Eng: You will not die before me, I am the older brother.

Chang: How will I find you?

Eng lifts his shirt exposing the fleshy cord that connects them --

Eng: Tug on it. I will be on the other end.

-- A *shooting star* streaks the sky --

Excitedly they move their hands through their coordinated *Hand Dance* --

Chang: You run around inside of me.

Eng: You run around in me.

Lights come up. *Corpses* float around them --

Lighting Shift --

Chang pulls Eng along. They come upon Nik, the father, lying on the ground. Mother attends to him.

Mother: Eng? Chang? Your father...

Eng bends down and examines him. Eng looks to Chang --

Chang: We will take father's body to the Temple when it is light --

Mother: Take him now. The monks must cremate him. I do not want him rotting like a dead animal.

They lift their father's Body --

The Temple

We hear *chanting* of the *atanatiya sutra* --

Chang and Eng stare at the hellish vision --

Chang: They pile the bodies to burn.

A MONK appears holding a *torch*.

Monk: All life is suffering --

The Monk ignites the *bodies*. A wall of *Flames*. Bodies Writhe --

Chang and Eng recite a Thai Buddhist prayer. Unconsciously, they move their hands through the intricate *Hand Dance*.

Buddham saranam gacchaami.
Dhammam saranam gacchaami.
Sangham saranam gacchaami. 1

Lighting Shift.

Chang and Eng remove their shirts, stretch in preparation for the race --

Eng steps aside and observes his brother Chang.

Eng: We are not deformed, yet we are. You are handsome little brother.

Chang: Speak up. I cannot hear you.

Eng: You bet Chanarong 10 of our ducks against one of his piglets? Fool.

Chang: A pig for a couple ducks is a good deal.

Eng: A runt of a *piglet* for ten of the most flavorful ducks in the kingdom? You should have started at 6 and countered twice to 8.

Chang: You said we need a pig, let us get a pig.

Eng: The Main Landing to the dock? Tell Chanarong to change it to late afternoon when the tide is coming in.

Chang: Let us swim and be done with it.

Eng: If we swim late afternoon, we swim against the tide and will play into our strength. Chanarong is quick but he tires easily --

-- they push their bodies together --

Chang: Yak, yak big brother, as long as we win.

They ready themselves, poised to dive.

Katherine-Josephine: 1828.

A MAN appears --

Captain Hunter: Ho! What is this odd creature?

Chang & Eng: Go! [[Chinese/Chaozhou Prefecture early 1800s]]

They move their arms in a deft *choreographed swimming motion* --

Hunter: -- a system of coordinated arm strokes and leg paddling that allows them to out swim the normal boys. Two fish become one. Fascinating. Grotesque. I am compelled to watch --

-- Chang and Eng enjoy the physical competition and boisterously shout encouragement to each other --

Hunter: Boys! I am Captain Robert Hunter of the trading ship, the Sachem! I will be back!

Chang and Eng are victorious --

Shadowy outline of a *Young Woman* (Somsri-Afong Moy) appears.

Chang and Eng dress --

Chang: Chanarong's sister? Somsri? She likes you.

No response.

Chang: You do not know girls.

Eng: I know girls.

Chang: You know how to put your penis in them, you do not know them.

No response.

Chang: What of when we marry?

Eng: It will be business. What they offer, what we offer.

Chang scoffs.

Eng: I know you, brother. That is enough for me.

1st MINISTER whacks a large *Gong* --

Bong! Bong! Bong!

1st Minister: (announcing) King Rama III, the King of Siam!

Chang and Eng are dragged before KING RAMA and prostrate themselves.

1st Minister: It is hereby decreed that said Chang and Eng, referred to as the 'Two Headed *Chii--Nee* Monster', is an omen of evil tidings and sentenced to die by beheading --

Chang: King Rama III, yes, we have two heads and are lowly rickshaw Chinamen --

Eng: -- But we are one quarter proud Siamese --

1st Minister: Silence, Two-Headed Chii-Nee Monster! Take it away!

Chang pulls out an *Egg* --

Chang: We grow the economy --

Eng: We dutifully pay our taxes --

1st Minister: Guards, remove the --

King: Wait.

The King takes the egg.

King: You grow the ducks from Samutsongkram? The flavor of your ducks is well-known throughout the kingdom. We do not dislike the Chii-Nee, we do not always trust them in business.

Chang: We do not always trust the Siamese.

1st Minister is about to strike Chang. King gestures to stop.

King: You give me a gift, demon. Perhaps you are good demons. Good demons gifted with the talent of counsel. Counsel, that is never wrong.

1st Minister: (Aside) If it is, you end up headless.

King nods to his 1st Minister --

1st Minister: (spoken very quickly in one breath) -- King Rama III has a query for the Two Headed Siamese-Chii-Nee Monster: We have lived in peace and harmony since Phutthaloetla -- later known as King Rama II, inheritor from Chakri, known as Ramathibodi -- rescued her from the former tyrant. But now --

King Rama: But now the English sit on our western border making demands. The French look in from the east. What does the Two Headed Demon think the Kingdom of Siam should do?

Eng and Chang touch their heads together and are still.

The King watches amused.

Then, with no words exchanged, Chang takes out an *egg* --

Chang: The Hen. Lives in peace and harmony --

Eng pulls out *two more eggs* --

Chang: Two Drakes appear --

With synchronous agility, they enact the story with their hands and eggs --

Eng: When two Drakes desire the same Hen, what must the Hen do to maintain the peace and harmony?

Chang: The Hen proceeds with extreme care. And shows no special favoritism to either Drake. This way --

Eng: The English and the French Drakes each wonder if the other has a *special* relationship with the Hen and thus will make no aggressive moves --

Chang: -- for fear --

Eng: -- of incurring the other's jealous wrath --

The King: In this way Siam's peaceful neutrality is insured by King Rama III masterfully balancing the forces of competing outside nations.

Eng: 'Both parties are subdued and neither party loser.'

The King nods approval. Chang and Eng bow.

1st Minister: Next!

Katherine-Josephine: The Negotiation.

Chang and Eng next to their mother, Nok, across from Captain Hunter. Nok has a *European lace shawl* draped over her shoulders. Lim holds a *carved pipe* --

Hunter: -- we will give a 70-30 percentage split of the net revenue. Judging what other exhibitions draw in Boston and New York, we could make up to a thousand dollars the first week. Your share would be three hundred American dollars minus expenses.

Chang: No.

Hunter: I have already agreed to pay for the cost of your passage to the Americas and your board. My partners will not agree to less than your 70-30 split. It would be unheard of --

Chang: We have a prosperous duck and egg business. We now prepare thousand year old eggs, and soon, raising pigs. Why should we go with you?

Hunter: You will no longer have the duck business.

Eng: You are mistaken.

Hunter: When Nok marries Lim, he will run the business.

Eng: Mother? It is our business --

Chang: -- the ducks belong to us --

Mother: You will listen to Lim.

She nods to Hunter and exits with Lim --

Eng: Your new shawl. From London? And your English pipe, Lim?

Hunter: I would seize upon this offer --

Chang: Go to Buddha's 5th level of hell --

Eng: You trade in the Kingdom at our King's pleasure.

Hunter: Yes.

Eng: It has cost you much to build this trade business.

Hunter: My soul and then some.

Eng: King Rama III is our personal protector. He believes we bring good fortune to the kingdom. On occasion we counsel him about matters of politics. And on occasion, matters of trade with foreigners. Who is good for the kingdom. And who is not.

Silence.

Hunter: You are not as young as you appear. A 50-50 split of the gross profits? We cover all costs of your passage and once we begin to exhibit, costs are split equally?

Chang looks to Eng --

Eng: Done.

Chang: Done.

Lighting Shift.

Chang and Eng move to look out at the view of the Mae Klong River.

Chang: Lim will smoke up the profits in his pipe, lose the duck business and what becomes of Mama?

Eng: She takes care of herself.

Chang: I do not want us to go.

Eng: Chang? Where was home for Grandpa? Chaozhou Prefecture in China. Where was home for Papa? Here, along the Mae Klong River, in Siam. China Men go where they have to to sell their wares. That is what home is for them. That is what home must be for us.

Chang is silent.

Eng: We will be paid. It is business.

Eng slides in beside Chang and they put their arms around each other's shoulders in their classic pose.

Eng: Do you want me to leave?

No response.

Eng lets his head droop to the side and *leaves*.

The world cuts to Silence.

Chang begins to weep --

Katherine-Josephine *praying* --

Chang *recites the prayer* --

Eng: 'Absence from those we love is self from self - a deadly banishment.'

Katherine-Josephine: 1868. The American Museum. New York.

Chang and Eng older. Distinguished Gentlemen.

Chang: I know you do not want to do this. Do you think he knows what we want from him?

Eng: I am sure he knows what we ate for dinner as well as breakfast.

Chang: I hate coming to him like this, groveling on our hands and knees --

Eng: This is what you want, is it not? Do we have a choice? Or would you rather we pray?

Chang: Do not make fun of my God.

Eng: Be on good behavior, it is not about you or your God, but the deal --

Barnum sweeps in --

Barnum. We meet again after this long, long while. The Siamese Twins --

Eng: Siamese-American.

Barnum: Chang and Eng --

Chang: (both) Bunker.

Eng:

Barnum: So why have you boys come to see me?

Eng: Do you need to ask?

Chang: Stop calling us boys we are grown men for god's sake.

Eng: Chang? Please?

Barnum: Chang and Eng wish to tour Europe again.

Chang: We need you to make the arrangements for us.

Barnum: What makes you so sure I want to?

Silence.

Eng: Because Chang and Eng have been a thorn in Barnum's side since the day they arrived. They became so famous that when someone mentioned their names to him, he would claim he discovered them to assuage his bruised ego. We offer a chance to end that. To finally put your name above ours. 'Phineas T. Barnum presents the Siamese Twins'. That is how it will read on all the handbills and posters. That is how it will read in history books.

Barnum: You realize, I do not stand to make money. This is more of a prestige tour for Barnum Enterprises --

Chang: Hogwash, you are hurting for money as much as us. The War ruined all of us and unless we can make up for the losses we all stand to lose everything.

Barnum: It will take a while to arrange something in Europe --

Chang: 5 months.

Barnum: Something like this takes a good 2 years of preparation --

Chang: 6 months.

Barnum: What is the hurry? A tour of this caliber demands meticulous planning and aggressive advance groundwork both here and in Europe, if we want to make money --

Chang: Blah-blah-blah-blah-blah --

Eng: Phineas. We came to you because you are the best --

Chang: Blah-blah-blah --

Eng: We will make it worth your while in order to meet the timeline. Only the main cosmopolitan centers where we are best known – London, Paris, Vienna - fewer performances but we will hold them in the larger venues.

Pause.

Barnum: I read you unloaded your gun on some reporters.

Eng: It was a misunderstanding.

Barnum: That is not what the local constables told me.

Chang: Everybody knows you have to discharge your gun now and then to keep the barrel clean. A stray reporter might have wandered into my sights...

Barnum: Now those are the scoundrels I remember. You boys had me worried you had become civilized. 50-50 split right down the middle – profits, costs, expenses, everything. You agree?

Eng: Have your solicitors draw up the contracts.

Chang: 6 months.

Barnum: Impossible, 9 months.

Chang: 6 months.

Barnum: We will be forced to pay exorbitant fees to break existing contracts and triple the usual fees to get vendors to rearrange schedules --

Eng: 6 months, Phineas. It must be that way.

Beat.

Barnum: A deal.

They shake hands --

An extremely old BLACK WOMAN in a rocking chair is lit up stage in profile. A Museum Exhibit.

Barnum: Ahh. My first big attraction. George Washington's nanny. The oldest living

person on the face of the earth. 153 years old. Look, look, the only thing she can move is her finger...

The Nanny lifts her hand slowly, raises her middle finger.

Barnum: George Washington would be ashamed of you!

Woman: I am Joice Heath and I am only 47 years old. This is what slavery does to you.

-- George Washington's Nanny takes off her dress and becomes LEARNED JACK --

-- Ropes and riggings drop from the fly space.

-- Sailors holler orders and shout curses --

Katherine-Josephine: Bangkok to Boston!

Captain Hunter: Listen up you Abigails! This is a wooden brig, the SACHEM, with a cargo hold fat with sugar, sapan wood, tin, gabbage, teak. And our most prized cargo, Master Chang and Master Eng. My personal guests and there will be hell to pay if either gets so much as a rope burn on their arses!

Chang and Eng put their feet into loops of rope and are pulled straight up into the air to the look-out bridge.

Chang and Eng: (Scream with delight) Ahhhhhhh!!!

GOOD JOHN, a weathered American deck-hand, yanks on one of the ropes --

Good John: (hollering up) Young Master Chang! Do you fuckin' see any sight of God's great terra fuckin' firma! Look to the four winds before you give judgment boy!

Chang: (calling down) Good John sir, we have looked to the four corners and we do not see any of God's great terra fuckin' firma!

Good John: Good, good!

LEARNED JACK, a free Black Englishman, works high up on the riggings --

Learned Jack: As we near land, the birds will have more meat on their frames --

Eng: That one! It is huge! What is it?

Learned Jack: Oh, you do not want to eat that one. That is the Great Albatross, young gents. That is the holiest of holies.

Good John: (hollering up) How does God fuckin' blow the cock suckin' winds?

Chang: (calling down) Good John, God blows South by Southwest, true and cock suckin' full!

Eng: A leg could feed 3 families!

Good John: You do not touch the Mollymawk! It is part bird and part God!

Learned Jack: Easy Good John! They are still shittin' their baby wrappings!

Good John: I am a God fearin' man unlike that heathen Learned Jack! Just because he is a book reader, he is given to too free thinking!

Captain Hunter: (calling) Good John, no bark juice on the deck!

Good John staggers away talk-singing from Coleridge's poem --

Good John: Ah! Well a-day! What evil looks/ Had I from old and young!/ Instead of the cross, the albatross/ About my neck was hung --

Night. Learned Jack covers Good John with a blanket.

Chang: Learned Jack --

Eng: You do not make sense.

Learned Jack: Gents?

Eng: Your father was an American slave.

Chang: You speak the King's English.

Learned Jack: You see 'neath the skin of things. My father never took to being owned and when the English arrived to reclaim the colonies, he readily fought with them. As reward, they made him a free man, brought him back to London. My father raised me with a keen sense of justice.

Good John: Hah!

Learned Jack: You would not know it but he was a man of high principle and ideals.

Good John: God is all I believe in now, not this blasphemmer.

Learned Jack: (gently) Yes, John, rest, rest...

Good John: He tempts me to the devil -- 1st Corinthians 6:9-10. And I yield...

Learned Jack: You will enter the kingdom. Do you abide by the way you are?

Chang: We are special.

Eng: The heavens want us together more than not.

Learned Jack: What if the heavens do not give a damn?

Eng: Do you abide by the way you are?

Learned Jack: I abide by the way I am. I do not abide by the way others see I am.

Eng: How do others see you?

Learned Jack: What comes of you if they cut you apart?

Chang: The King's physician said we would die.

Good John: So would we...

Eng: How do others see you Mr. Jack?

Learned Jack helps Good John up --

Learned Jack: We make land soon. You will enjoy Boston. As you come into harbor it smells of a spit roasted lamb, spiced with offerings from an Irish Shantee.

Chang: You show us Boston.

Learned Jack: Boston is a free city but my father is in me and I will not abide by a nation that buys and sells men. We will not step onto land there.

Eng: By all accounts you are treated no different than the white sailors. You are paid an equal wage, move freely above and below the decks --

Learned Jack: I am a *Black Jack*. Only at sea. You may think America knows you. It does not.

Eng: We are not Black.

Learned-Jack: You are not White and that is what matters to some men. Come dear John, come awake now --

Learned-Jack holds Good John --

Learned Jack: -- They have not seen the likes of you in color of skin or shape of body. It is yet to be seen what you are in America's eyes.

Lighting Shift --

The *sounds* and *noises* of *street life*.

Chang and Eng look about in shock and wonder --

Katherine-Josephine: 1829. Boston!

Chang: Banging, clanging, shouting --

Eng: Chang? Chang?

Chang: Big, tall, hairy --

Eng: What is that? And that? Chang?

Chang: It is noisy as cock suckin' hell --

Eng: What do they say? What? What do they say? --

Chang: The women smell like over-ripe flowers --

Eng: Oily clouds, shallows of human waste, everything covered in a skin of soot -- We have descended into the first level of Buddha's hell --

Chang: America!

-- SUSAN and ABEL COFFIN stride in with several Assistants: Tailor, Dresser, Barber, Cobbler --

Susan: My goodness, my goodness --

Abel: Hunter was true to his word --

Susan: I thought he was exaggerating to get your money --

Abel: In God's name, it is beyond the scope of earthly imagination --

Susan: What is it drinking? Abel, is it drinking ale? No, no, no! No drinking ale! (grabbing Chang's cup) Take the cup away from it Abel.

Abel: Hunter said it speaks some English.

Susan: Hello? Hello? Do you speak English? Do—you—speak----English?

Chang: Give me my ale back, cunte.

Captain Robert Hunter enters --

Hunter: Chang and Eng, Susan and Abel Coffin, they are my business partners in this venture. They are your partners, too, now. Susan and Abel, may I present Chang and

Eng from Siam.

Abel: We have met.

Hunter: Their English is remarkably good, you can communicate with them --

Susan: It does not look nor act Oriental --

Eng: Business partners?

Chang: We did not sit down face to face --

Hunter: You drive too hard a bargain, I need them to afford you.

Susan Coffin: We are wasting time --

-- Susan Coffin claps her hands. The tailor and dresser begin to dress them; the barber attacks with his shears but they refuse to let him cut their queues; the cobbler fits them with new shoes --

Chang: (surprised) Ho!

Susan: -- If it is to be Siamese, we must make it Siamese.

Chang: (warning) Ho! Ho!

Eng: What do they do --

Hunter: They do not like to be handled --

Chang *smacks* the tailor --

Chang and Eng have been transformed: Infantilized, they appear as two harmless boys.

Susan moves them down stage and begins to pose them --

Eng: What is this now?

Hunter: Listen and do what Susan and Abel tell you.

Eng: Hunter?

Chang: Eng?

Eng: We are working, Chang. This is business.

Susan Coffin: No, do not move. Make no eye contact. Look straight ahead --

Hunter: They will not hurt you...

A Line of Spectators stares.*

Chang: Are you shaking?

Eng: My mouth is dry.

Susan Coffin: (whispering) Do not move! Stay exactly like that!

Chang: Think of the money we make --

Susan Coffin: Quiet!

Chang and Eng hold their poses. Stare out unmoving.

Slow fade to black.

Lighting Shift --

Pounding machinery and hissing steam. Captain Hunter leads Chang and Eng passed a factory. Stove-pipe hats. They cover their mouths with handkerchiefs, wipe soot off their faces and necks.

Hunter: Gentlemen? The exhibition is beyond the expectations of all of us. We extend from a weekend booking well into three months, even the President has come to see you. You are so successful you will be going to London and tour the Continent.

Chang: London? Learned Jack said it is even bigger and dirtier than Boston --

Eng: Robert, if we find new breeds of English duck, we will bring them back. You will get us good cages --

Hunter: I am a ship captain. I must return to my trading routes or lose them. I am selling my partnership to the Coffins. They will look after you from now.

Chang: You sell us to the Coffins?

Hunter: I do not sell you, I sell my share in the partnership --

Chang: That is not how the Coffins will think, they act as if we are pet monkeys to be locked up between shows. They only let us out when you come to parade us around to drum up more business --

Hunter: I take you out because I know you are curious about --

Eng: We do not trust them. We ask to see the records after the show and they act as if they have no ears. We see lines of people out into the streets but we see no money.

Hunter: I am afraid that is the way it is, boys --

Chang: Judas Priest, we are not *boys*!

Eng: Do you trust the Coffins?

Hunter holds out a *stack of Bills* --

Hunter: I have made arrangements so you can keep your money in the Bank of Boston. I have opened an account under your names. You would do well to consider a family surname.

Chang: How much is a dollar in *pot duang*?

Eng: Do you trust them?

Hunter: You will be working for them now, Eng. I *trust* that they will take good care of you both. (to Chang) A dollar is worth many *pot duang*, Chang. More than you can imagine --

-- Susan and Abel Coffin holding *Legal Papers*. Hunter crosses to them, signs the Papers and exits --

YOUNG PT BARNUM enters and joins Susan and Abel Coffin.

Upstage AFONG MOY exhibited. A beautiful young Chinese woman with bound feet. She speaks Mandarin to imaginary guests, pretends to be eating from a bowl with chopsticks --

Chang: There is that young snake oil salesman who bothers us.

Eng stares at Afong Moy --

Chang: Let us teach them all a lesson.

Katherine Josephine enters with a *leather box*, opens it --

Afong sees Eng and immediately becomes enraged. She wobbles on her tiny *bound feet* --

Afong Moy: (to Eng) Who are you? How dare you come in here! Who said you could come in here? If you have any dignity as a man you will leave immediately!

Afong Moy fades.

-- Chang and Eng take out 2 *Pistols*. With an experienced shooter's hand, Chang and Eng take aim and --

-- Bang! Bang!

-- Susan, Abel and Young PT scatter --

Katherine-Josephine: A Pickled Barrel of Twins.

Ocean sounds. Pounding on door. Lights up.

Susan and Abel Coffin's Cabin. Chang and Eng stand in front of Susan and Abel's bed. Chang munches on a bird leg, appraising the cabin --

Abel: What are you doing in here?

Susan: Get out!

Eng: Where in the agreement does it say you eat fresh bird and we get dried out coosh fried in rancid pig fat?

Chang: Ho! This is good drink. Do you mind?

Chang takes a swig from a bottle, passes it to Eng --

Susan: You boys have food and drink and a good bed. The other sailors sleep down there and we gave you your own private area --

Eng: We are not sailors.

Abel: Eng, we can talk about this in the morning.

Eng: We should talk about it now.

Abel: This is all covered in the agreement --

Susan: We can talk about it now.

Able: Susan --

Susan: If Mr. Eng and Mr. Chang want to take care of this now then let us take care of this now.

She goes to a chest and pulls out a *parchment* --

Susan Coffin: In the agreement we made with Hunter it states how you are to be transported. There. It is the same arrangement you made with Hunter. It may not

have mattered on his trading ship but this is a modern vessel outfitted for classes of passengers. (reading) 'They will be accommodated in keeping with the other sailors.'

Chang: We did not sign this.

-- Eng studies the contract --

Eng: They do not need our signatures.

Susan: We purchased the contract and all that you agreed to with it. Now please go.

Eng: There is a large barrel down in steerage. It is filled to the brim with, what did he call it?

Chang: For-mal-de-hide.

Abel: What barrel?

Chang: The one First Mate says is to pickle us if we croak on the way to London.

Susan: First mate Butts does not know what he is talking about.

Eng: First mate said you told him.

Chang: We beat it out of him.

Chang and Eng get into the Coffins' bed --

Susan: My god --

Abel: What are you doing?

Chang: Do not be concerned, we are used to sleeping ten in a room.

Chang and Eng go to sleep.

Katherine-Josephine: London Calling.

Chang and Eng in an isolated pool of light.

Abel: (OS) Charles Grey, the new Prime Minister, in the house right box.

Susan: (OS) Do not move, do not speak, nothing. Leave all the work to them.

Chang: Brother?

-- Chang offers his *flask* to Eng who takes a big swallow --

Eng: Would you pay two weeks salary to look at us?

Susan: (OS) They are drinking.

Chang: Breathe deeply. Relax.

Abel: (OS) Ladies and Gentlemen. Presenting the amazing Siamese Double Boys. Born in the wilds of Siam. Cursed by a freakish body. Rescued by an English Captain. Then tamed and mannered by its American owners, Susan and Abel Coffin. Never seen before by occidental eyes! Please look upon this curiosity of nature! Marvel at this living exhibition of the Mysterious Orient!

-- Curtain rises. Lights up full on Chang and Eng.

Up stage, *the Line of Spectators* stares.

Chang and Eng rigidly hold their poses.

Eng: Do not move.

Chang: My ass itches --

Chang farts --

Eng: Did you break wind?

Chang: The food was oily.

Eng: I told you not to eat the fried dough cakes --

-- Chang breaks wind again --

Eng: No breaking wind, Chang!

The Spectators respond to Eng and Chang's commotion with an excited murmur...

Chang notices. Moves more --

Chang: They like it, Eng.

Chang relaxes and strikes his own poses. Spectators murmur with a growing approval.

Susan: (OS) Abel, do something.

Eng hesitantly follows Chang's lead. He looks at the Spectators --

Chang: They have not seen the likes of us in skin or shape. Should I fart a diddy? The

Captain's boy taught me a sailor's jig --

The Line of Spectators are now down stage of Chang and Eng.
At a lower elevation, look up stage at Chang and Eng.

Chang waves and the Spectators applaud excitedly --

Chang: Hello. I am Chang. This is Eng.

Susan: (OS) Oh, my god --

Abel: (OS) They are speaking to the audience.

Chang: We are Chang and Eng. We tamed the Coffins. They were wild and could not speak Siamese. We learned sailor speak --

Susan: (OS) Oh no, dear lord...

Chang: 'Ah! Well a-day! What evil looks/ Had I from old and young!/ Instead of the cross, the albatross/ About my neck was hung' --

More applause, shouts, the crowd grows unruly --

Chang: 'May the hairs on your arse turn to hammers and beat your balls to death'!

Raucous cheers --

-- A tall, angular GENTLEMAN with a *cane* pushes by the Coffins and the approaches the Twins on stage --

Susan: Abel? Do you know this man --

Able: Excuse me, sir. What are you doing --

Gentleman pushes by Abel --

Gentleman: I am Sir Charles Manning. I represent the Empire Club For Truth In Science. I do not believe this, you are charlatans, a cheap Yankee carnival act -- I doubt you are even Siamese --

Abel: Excuse me, sir --

Manning: (poking with his cane) What are you? Poor Indian savages made up to look Oriental? And let us see -- (continue)

Susan: (overlapping) They have been examined by the head physician at the London Medical College --

Manning: -- where you are supposedly attached --

Eng: (snatching the cane) Do not touch us, man.

Manning: How dare you, savage. Such insolence - give me that back --

-- Eng parries his attempts with the cane --

Manning: (fighting to reach in) I paid two and a half shillings I demand to examine this supposed flesh that connects you --

-- As Manning pushes forward, Chang strikes him with his fist and Eng whacks him soundly with the cane. Manning drops to the floor. Chang and Eng kick and beat the fallen man a few more times with satisfied vengeance. The crowd *roars* its approval --

Katherine-Josephine: The English Woman.

Afternoon reception-party for Chang and Eng --

They approach a WOMAN who is alone, *smoking* --

Woman: Ahh, the main attractions of the show. I am Lady Monroe. Sir Edward Monroe, my husband, is the Attache to the French Consulate here in London.

Chang: They do not talk to you.

Eng: They do not see you.

Elizabeth: They are my husband's friends. I have my own.

Chang: Who are your friends?

Elizabeth: Types you would never meet. Poets, Artists, Musicians - the whores of proper society.

Chang: I like whores.

Eng: Sailor-speak.

Elizabeth studies Chang --

Elizabeth: You are the one who likes to box people. You caused quite a rumpus at the performance.

Chang: We have been watching you.

Elizabeth: Really?

Eng: You interest us.

Elizabeth: Really? Call me Elizabeth. May I entice you with something? Do you boys drink?

-- Elizabeth pours them each a glass of amber liquid.

Elizabeth: Do you always dress like that in public? You do not change your costume?

No response -

Elizabeth: How old are you?

Eng: Why do you ask about our clothes?

Elizabeth: You dress like children.

Silence.

Elizabeth: (to Chang) Do you like it?

Chang offers his glass, she pours --

Elizabeth: Cognac --

Chang: (repeating) Cognac, cognac...

Elizabeth: -- It is a French drink, Mr. Chang. Here, let me show you something --

-- She lights a *match* and heats the glass.

Elizabeth: (demonstrating) Inhale. Exquisite, isn't it? Let it sit in your mouth. Now swallow. What do you think?

Chang: Good, tasty. Another new flavor. Let us add this to the list.

Eng: What do you mean, 'we are dressed like children'?

Elizabeth: I talk too much.

Chang: We are not allowed to smoke or drink.

Elizabeth: Who watches after you, the same person who dresses you? You have no idea what the Occidental world can offer you, what pleasures you have been missing.

Chang: I like what the Occidental can offer. What Elizabeth offers.

Eng: What do you see us wearing, Lady Elizabeth?

Elizabeth: (she steps back and examines them) First, I would get rid of those bloody school boy outfits. Something more stylish. Dignified but not stodgy - You are world-famous figures, who have had an audience with the Royal Family. 'We are not easy to peg, we are capable of a sudden passion, or, playful mischief. We are men of mystery'.

Chang and Eng are silent.

Elizabeth: Gentlemen?

Chang: She is the one.

Eng: We have been eager to ask.

Chang: The rich ladies in Boston, too.

Elizabeth: Yes?

Chang: Why are your arses so big?

Silence.

Elizabeth: It is called a bustle. It is the current fashion.

Eng: I do not understand.

Chang: (reaching out to touch) Can we?

Elizabeth: No.

Chang touches her -

Eng: How is this fashion? Explain.

Elizabeth: The Hotentot Venus? One, Sara Baartman. An exotic, beautiful, full-bodied African lady - brought over, paraded around. Like you, everyone came to see her. Her *posterior* was large.

Chang: (to Eng) Arse?

Eng: Yes.

Elizabeth: We all stared but no one would speak it aloud. Instead we went home, closed our bedroom doors and fantasized about this posterior until one day we woke up and voila! We had *big arses*! In a *fashion* of speaking.

Chang: I do not understand.

Elizabeth: May you Gentlemen not suffer her fate.

Eng: Do men have posteriors that speak fashion?

Elizabeth: They wear something else. A codpiece. Especially during Shakespeare's time. To make themselves look bigger down there.

Chang: Bollocks?

Elizabeth: Mr. Chang, you have been paying attention to how the English speak.

Chang: Sailor-speak. Bollocks!

Eng: Who is Shakespeare? A king?

Elizabeth: Do you read English?

Chang: Eng has taught himself to read very good. He reads everything.

Elizabeth: Then I will gift him a book, a collection of his works. I think you might enjoy Mr. William Shakespeare, Mr. Eng. I do believe you are now ready. Are you ready?

Chang: We are ready.

Eng: For what?

Elizabeth gathers a *flask of green liquid* --

Elizabeth: -- *La Fee Verte*, the "Green Fairy". *Absinthe* *--

Chang: (repeating to himself) Absinthe, absinthe...

Elizabeth: The drink of artists and madmen – George Sand. Drink with caution my American friends.

Chang: (takes a formidable drink) Ai-yah!

Elizabeth: 'We cannot tear out a single page of our life, but we can throw the whole book in the fire!'

-- Elizabeth takes a healthy swig. Eng sips gingerly --

Eng: [swears in Chinese].

Chang throws back the whole glass --

Chang: This drink, what do you call it?

Elizabeth: Absinthe.

Beat --

Chang: This drink. What do you call it? (beat) I said that already?

Eng: Damn you, Chang. I want to sip, okay? Savor the experience.

Elizabeth: You feel what he feels?

Eng: I do not like being drunk.

Chang: But I do and he will.

Eng: Sip it Chang.

Chang: Oh, stuff it, Eng.

Chang takes Eng's glass and downs it --

Eng: You bloody, cocksucker ass-wipe. You drink too much and I get out of control --

-- Eng takes Elizabeth's glass and downs it --

Chang: "Bloody cocksucker ass-wipe"? Was that you, Eng?

Elizabeth: You are not like Edward or any of the other men I have known. You are two. I do not know. You are Siamese. I do not know. I wonder what your organ looks like?

Eng: You are speaking aloud.

Elizabeth: I am? Oh...

-- they burst into laughter --

Eng: We do not need codpieces!

Chang: Exactly, Eng. Big bollocks!

Eng: Big bollocks!

Chang: And we'd love to try an English lady.

Elizabeth: Shhssh! Shhssh! Everyone is staring --

Chang: Siamese girls smell of fresh fish and tea. Americans smell like overripe flowers and butter --

-- Chang sniffs Elizabeth closely --

Elizabeth: I think the other patrons would not mind if we stepped outside and took some fresh air --

Dim to darkness.

Elizabeth's House. Later.

Chang and Eng in half light changing out of their old clothes. HAM, Elizabeth's butler, assists them.

Elizabeth: How are you gentleman fairing? Do you know how everything is worn?
Hamish?

Hamish: They are doing fine.

Elizabeth: Oh – Do not look, do not look at yourselves. Mr. Chang, Mr. Eng, close your eyes. Ham, finish dressing them. I have a surprise. I will pour us brandies to celebrate the shedding of old skin and the spreading of new found wings. Ham?

Ham: They are ready lady Monroe.

Elizabeth: Do you know what a mirror is?

Chang: (off) Mir--ror?

Eng: (off) We saw a small one in Boston.

Elizabeth: No, not a hand mirror. This is different. It is like nothing you have seen and you definitely do not hold it in your hand. This is a Cheval Glass full-length body Mirror –

Elizabeth pulls the drape away revealing the mirror.

Elizabeth: Well, what do you think, Gentleman?

Chang and Eng stare --

Elizabeth: Chang? Eng? Are you all right?

Chang: That is us?

Eng: That is how we look?

Elizabeth: You have seen yourselves?

Chang: Never all of us.

Eng: All of our bodies. Like this.

Chang: We are grown up.

Eng: We are men.

Elizabeth: Yes, yes, you are.

-- Chang undresses Elizabeth. Elizabeth undresses Chang --

Chang: What does Elizabeth offer two brothers from the Orient...

Eng: Do I know you?

Ham: I did see my father's dark skin, perhaps you will know my son.

-- they continue to disrobe --

Chang: Eng?

Elizabeth: Eng?

Ham: Do not mind me. I am not here.

Eng turns back to Chang and Elizabeth and she begins to undress him. Chang continues to undress Elizabeth --

Fade to black --

Later --

Elizabeth stands with a sheet draped around her. She watches Chang and Eng sleeping. Chang awakens. Eng snores quietly.

Chang: (slowly) *Elizabeth*. It is new to my tongue. *Elizabeth*.

Elizabeth: I do talk a lot. I have done some scandalous things. But this. I do not know if Edward can forgive me. Not this time.

Chang: Come with us. Elizabeth. Back to America. Eng will agree. God wants us to be together more than apart. You are special.

Elizabeth: Is this the way it always is? You both having to share a woman?

Chang: You did not like it?

Elizabeth: You are quite coordinated in your moves – it was both of you, yes?

Chang: Yes. (looking down at Eng) I let Eng sleep. I always wake up first. But I wait till he wakes up and then pretend I am waking up.

Elizabeth: I know I should not but I feel sad for you. The life you have to live.

Chang: We are happy. We are together. We have always been together.

Elizabeth: No, you Chang. Just you. You will never know what it feels like to be alone with another person.

Chang: Why would we want to?

Elizabeth leans in and whispers something to him.

Chang: What is that?

Elizabeth: A secret. Something only you and I share. Not Eng.

Chang: What if I tell Eng?

Elizabeth: Then it is no longer a secret. A secret is between two people, Chang and Elizabeth, and no one else. That makes us special to each other. If you tell Eng, then we no longer have it. Tell me something. Give me a secret, Chang.

Chang: Everything I know Eng knows.

Elizabeth: This one time, be of your own mind and body.

Chang thinks. Then Chang leans in and whispers something. Elizabeth pulls back and studies Chang.

Elizabeth: How does it feel?

Chang is silent. He looks down at Eng. Elizabeth touches Chang's face, he turns his gaze to her --

Chang takes Elizabeth's hand and begins moving it through the *hand-dance* --

Eng stirs --

Chang: Come with me. Elizabeth?

Eng: You did not wake me?

Elizabeth: We should get dressed. I will have Hamish arrange for the carriage to return you to your hotel.

Chang: What about you?

Elizabeth: Sir Edward and I have a dinner engagement. It would be improper to keep him waiting. You have a good life, Mr. Chang. And you, too, Mr. Eng. Oh, here is the book I promised. He was a king of sorts.

Elizabeth hands Eng the *Shakespeare Book* and exits --

Eng looks at Chang and the exiting Elizabeth.

Eng: What were you talking about?

Beat --

Chang: Nothing.

Eng watches Chang.

Eng: 'Is whispering nothing?'

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO --

Katherine-Josephine turns on a *gas lamp*.

Katherine-Josephine: 1832. Afong Moy. The Chinese Woman.

Chang and Eng as young men. Eng talks to Afong Moy whose tiny feet are propped up on a pillow. Chang draws the attention of ATUNG, her male chaperon, and plies him with liquor --

Eng: Our managers got together with your Mr. Barnum and decided we might *entertain* each other. We agree it is distasteful. We are sure it was a ploy on Barnum's part to see if he could get closer to us.

Afong does not respond --

Eng: We had nothing to do with it Miss Moy. We are suing our managers to get out of our contract. You should sue Barnum as well --

Afong: Excuse me, I have no idea what you are talking about. I have heard about you both. Atung has told me. What I perform is not a freak show. I am not deformed. I have *guests* who come to visit me.

Eng: We are not a freak show. We are not deformed. You have been badly misinformed Miss Moy. Chang and Eng are businessmen selling our wares.

Afong: People come to stare at you.

Eng: And pay 50 cents for that opportunity, 100% of which will be ours as soon as we are our own bosses, compared to your charging 10 cents of which you keep, what, 5 cents? 2 cents? And our visitors are anything but *guests*, they are paying customers and that is the way we like it.

Silence.

Afong: Why do you come to visit me now?

Eng: Because I read you are a true Chinese and I want to understand what that is. What the Chinese woman is.

Afong: Your accent is peculiar. Is that the Siamese influence?

Eng: Chaozhou Prefecture with two generations of Malay and Siamese living. I also came to apologize for last time we encountered each other.

Afong: Now that you have visited me, what do you think of the true Chinese?

Eng: Confusion and bitterness that a woman as you cannot walk and it is part of being Chinese.

Afong: Then you know nothing about Chinese people or the women. My feet are highly prized, they are not deformed, Mr. Eng.

Eng: We are businessmen, not freaks, Miss Moy. I was not born in China, I have not lived in China and my speaking, I am told, has an odd accent. After that first incident with you. You made me feel I should know the Chinese Woman. But when I look at you I feel I am not Chinese. Miss Moy, what am I?

Afong: I always pick out one person to look back at. If it is a child, I see if I can make her smile. If it is an adult. I see if I can make him turn his gaze away. What do you do when they stare?

Eng: We are too busy counting heads so we can be sure our business partners have recorded the crowd honestly in their books. The money is good. We will do this a few more years and then we will set up our own business.

Afong: In Siam?

Eng: Anywhere we choose. We have been to Europe, all over America. Perhaps Siam. Maybe China.

Beat.

Afong: Yours is a Chinese-ness I do not know. In a way I envy that. I feel confusion and bitterness of late. (beat) Do you know where I should like to go? As a child, I would be taken to the shore where they would put my feet in the water. It was both to soothe and heal the feet and distract a little girl in pain. I would love to sit on the shore and watch the boats come and go. Maybe even put my toes in the water...

Eng leans in and whispers something --

Afong looks over at Atung *snoring*, then nods at Eng --

Eng: Chang? Chang?

Eng and Chang form a chair between them with their arms overlapping and gently lift Afong in a sitting position. They carry her forwards.

We hear the *ocean waves breaking on shore* --

Eng looks at Chang and Chang steps back, tilts his head and *leaves* --

Afong: Your brother is repulsed by my feet.

Eng: Would you like to soak them?

Eng removes her slippers. Eng guides them into the water --

Afong: (moans) Ohh...

Eng bathes them. Sensual. Pleasurable --

Atung appears --

Atung: Afong!

Afong: (shoots him an imperious look) Atung.

Atung: (cowed) Afong. Please.

Afong looks at Eng, then nods to Atung who picks her up and carries her away.

Chang: You still think you are supposed to know her?

Eng: We are a different kind of Chinese. She said so herself. A new China Men. We do not know China and yet we live all over the world being Chinese.

Chang: Then let us start being new China Men and start selling our wares ourselves. We are of legal age, it is time to declare our independence --

Eng: Quiet.

-- Susan and Abel Coffin lit as Chang and Eng's SOLICITOR hands a *letter* to them --

Eng: Our solicitor delivers the letter --

-- The Coffins open the letter and read. They turn to look at Chang and Eng, then exit --

Eng: It is done.

Chang: You did not tell me.

Eng does not respond --

1868. New York. PT Barnum's American Museum.

Chang and Eng as Older Gentlemen. PT Barnum.

Barnum: -- Being Chinese is old hat, can you believe that? Too many of you running around the country these days, your reputation is worse than the Paddys. They call you the Shylocks of the east, like money a little too much. Beatings, shootings, lynchings --

Eng: We hear rumors.

Barnum: I had to figure out a new way to market you to this less than enamored public. Add some intrigue, spice things up a bit --

Chang: 'We hate each other so we go to Europe to have a doctor cut us apart?'

Barnum: Give or take a word here and there --

Eng: Tickets are selling --

Barnum: Not hand over fist. There is no excitement, we need madman-foaming-at-the-mouth-bites-dog excitement. This is PT Barnum presenting Chang and Eng, a sensational event in need of amazing sensationalism to boost sales. Chang? You asked to include your daughter on this trip. This will provide a convenient cover story.

Beat.

Chang: How much do you know?

PT: You have been making inquiries regarding medical doctors. The press there will find out. I trust you prefer this over reporters following her around badgering her with intimate questions about her health.

Chang is silent.

Barnum: I am not without heart Chang.

The Horse Chanters --

SALLIE and ADDIE YATES enter with a *horse bridle* --

A CROWD of town folks gathers to watch --

Chang and Eng go over to Addie and Sallie and take the bridle --

A HORSE enters. Beautiful, wild, moves around them in an agitated state. It snorts, stands on its hind legs and slams down dangerously close to Chang and Eng.

Chang and Eng remain composed, focused. We see their seamless and unspoken collaborative power. They approach the Horse. It bucks fiercely, nips at them. They do not flinch.

Chang and Eng stand quietly and stare at the Horse. Silence. They begin to *chant* a Thai Buddhist sutra. They *move their hands* in front of the Horse in a meditative, choreographed pattern.

The Horse relaxes. Dips its head deferentially. They approach and slip the bridle over its head. Chang and Eng lead the horse over to Addie and Sallie --

Chang and Eng, Sallie and Addie touch their heads together.

The Crowd murmurs --

1835. Chang and Eng Tour

Chang and Eng in a carriage driven by HALE, their new assistant. A few *under garments* hang drying outside the doors. Hale's *sings* a period minstrel song, Old Dan Tucker -

Hale: 'So get out deway, get out de-way
Get out de-way Old Dan Tucker
You're too late to come to supper'..

We hear *clapping, commotion, a gasp, then silence*. Then a *loud murmuring* --

Eng: (pulling down the under garments) What is going on?

Hale: I believe a celebration of sorts, sirs.

Chang: Let us invite ourselves and have some drink.

Eng: We run behind schedule, getting stuck in the mud cost us half a day. Not counting the 2 dollars to hire the oxen to pull us out –

Chang: A little pleasure, Brother, a little pleasure.

-- A Group of MEN, a WOMAN with a baby, approaches --

Chang: Ho! What is the celebration good sirs and madam?

Eli: A picnic.

Chang: Our throats are parched. You good gents and madam would not happen to have something to wet a man's whistle? We have only had creek water since morning and I believe I swallowed a tadpole or two.

-- The Group stares at Chang and Eng --

Eng: Perhaps we should be on our way. Hale --

Will: Come off. So we get a better look.

Henry: Chocktaw. Seminoles maybe...

Eng: This was not a good idea --

Chang: We are Chang and Eng, the Siamese Twins. Surely, you have heard of us?

Chang and Eng stand and display themselves --

Silence --

Chang: Gentlemen?

Henry: What in god's body...

Will: (overlapping) Abomination...

Eli: (overlapping) -- Dear lord, dear lord --

Eng: Gentleman, we are Siamese, not Indians. A simple mistake, not everyone knows the distinction. We come from the country of Siam --

-- The men come from behind and grab Chang and Eng around their necks in arm locks --

Chang: We are Chang and Eng, the famous Siamese Twins –

Eng: Show them the posters, show them the posters --

Hale: See, see, it is them, the famous Siamese Twins --

Chang: Get your hands off us, get your goddamn hands off of us --

Eli: They are strong, watch out!

Henry: We got plenty of rope left, Will--

Will: Hold 'em good --

Putting *nooses* around their necks --

Chang: We are Chang and Eng! You bloody cocksuckin' ass-wipes! Chang and Eng!

Behind them the looming *Shadows of Two Men Hanging* is cast on the walls --

Chang and Eng stare out at the hanged men --

-- JOSHUA, a well dressed Gentleman, enters hurriedly --

Joshua: Wait, wait, Will, Eli, Henry hold on -- Hold on!

Joshua walks up to Chang and Eng and examines them carefully --

Joshua: They are famous. They are known all over the World. You Gentleman doing a show around here?

Chang: Just passing through.

Joshua: That is a shame as we would appreciate seeing the renowned *Siamese Twins*.

Will: We thought they were Indians, Mr. Joshua --

Joshua: Hush. We apologize for any inconvenience we might have visited on you, sirs.

Chang: We should be on our way to make our next show.

Joshua: Where is that?

Chang: Jackson.

Will: They always get the good shows, nobody ever stops here.

Henry: (pointing to the *shadows* of the hanged men) Talking with an English accent. Claimed he was London born to a free black --

Chang and Eng stare --

Hale: What about the other?

Eli: White gent *mollie*, refused to leave the other. Said he would die.

Hale: We should be going. Good day gentleman, ma'am --

-- Chang and Eng stare back at the shadows of the two hanging men --

All freeze except Chang and Eng.

The looming *Shadows of the Hanged Men* lower. They come *alive*, take off their nooses and step out to reveal who was casting the shadows. It is Learned Jack and Good John *embodying* the hanged men --

Good John/Hanged Man: I have had better days.

Learned Jack/Hanged Man: So have many of us...

Good John: Our lives would be so much easier, if we simply chose --

Learned Jack: We do not choose, my friend. It is simply our natures.

Eng: It is none of our business.

Chang looks back at Learned-Jack and Good John --

Chang: (to Eng) Are we colored or abominations?

Learned Jack: You are not white.

Eng: We are famous.

Learned Jack: Before they had no name for you. Beware. They have seen the likes of you now and America knows what you are.

The *shadows* of two new hanging men --

Eng: (to Hale) Sing.

Hale doesn't respond --

Eng: If you value your job Mr. Hale, sing!

Hale: 'So get out deway, get out de-way
Get out de-way Old Dan Tucker
You're too late to come to supper'..

Learned Jack steps out and joins the singing. He co-opts the song --

Learned Jack: 'So get out deway, get out de-way
Get out de-way Old Dan Tucker' --

Chang and Eng look back at Learned Jack --

Learned Jack: -- 'You're too late to come to supper' ...

Lighting Shift.

Chang and Eng prepping for a performance. They *face each other* and do each other's stage make-up. Chang drinks from a *flask* --

Chang: We make good money and it is easy, Eng.

-- Eng does not respond.

Chang: Do you forget our life in Siam, Brother?

Eng: I tire of people poking us, grabbing at us.

Chang: For two of our duck eggs only half a *pot duang*.

Eng: The trip we took with Hunter's friend Dr. Calloway to North Carolina? We met the two girls, the Yates sisters --

Chang: Do you hear me?

Eng: You enjoyed the fishing - trout, perch, bass. A goodly number of fowl - turkey, ducks of all kinds --

-- Hale pokes his head in --

Hale: -- Gentlemen, the Hall Manager said there have been a rash of lynchings. Mostly Chocktaw. 10 minutes to curtain -- (exiting)

Eng: We have made more dollars than the richest Chinese trader in Siam.

Chang: And there is more where that came from. A fool walks away from money when it is thrown at him. They want to see us, Eng, we do not force them.

Eng: And what do they see when they look at us?

Chang: Who the devil cares?

Eng: And what will they see next when they look at us? I do not like the spotlight. I do not like all the attention. You like it. You puff up like a cock in a hen house. I am sick

of it, I am sick of all of it.

Chang: We make money, women throw themselves at us and we get treated like kings --

Eng: Are you slow Chang? Do you not know what happened back there? They wanted to hang us like the other two --

Chang: But they did not. They let us go. You are scared again, I can feel it. Everything scares you --

Eng: You would do well to be scared, too, if you had a lick of sense.

Chang: Run away, Brother. *Leave.*

silence --

Chang: We are Chang and Eng, remember? It has, 'nothing to do with us'? We are the New China Men?

Eng: Perhaps the new China Men need to be just that. Truly, New Chinamen.

TWO OFFICIALS. Carry a Bible, cutting Shears --

#1 Official: Put your hands on the Bible, sirs.

#2 Official brings up the shears and takes Chang's queue

#1 Official: Do you believe in God?

Chang is silent.

-- #2 Official lops off Chang's queue --

#1 Official: Do you believe in God?

Eng: If there is a profit.

#2 Official cuts Eng's queue off --

#1 Official: You are now United States citizens --

#2 Official: (shaking hands) Congratulations, boys...

Learned Jack: Welcome to the United States of America.

Good John hands the Bible to Chang. They exit --

Chang and Eng touch their foreheads. Each reaches around to touch the back of the other's head where his queue was shorn. They silently rock back and forth --

1836. Wilkes County, Mount Airy, North Carolina.

Chang and Eng stand looking out at their newly purchased property --

Wind. Occasional bird calls. Echo of Church Music.

Chang: If there is a Christian god, this is where he lives.

Eng: We live here now.

no response --

Eng: We do not miss Boston, Brother.

Chang: I miss the poker houses, the fine cigar, the fun of the game.

Eng: You drink too much and lose our earnings. That is neither fun nor smart.

Chang: I told you what I missed. I do not ask your opinion about it.

Eng: We are gentleman farmers now. No longer itinerant entertainers indulging in unseemly activities. We have land. We are *plantation* owners. We will grow tobacco and corn --

Chang: Eng? Wise Brother? We do not know how to farm.

Eng: The books we purchased in Cambridge. Basic farming practices. We will read, we will study.

Chang: You will read, you will study, I will be fishing. And if we fail, we return to touring Chang and Eng, the United Siamese Twins.

They look out --

Eng: What would Learned Jack think?

-- A *Slave, Canaan*, embodied by Learned Jack, enters carrying *drinks* and serves Chang & Eng. Eng watches Canaan --

Methodist Minister lit at pulpit --

Methodist Minister: (reading from a bible) -- And the Lord, angry over the killing of Abel did strike Cain's body and face with hail -- (continue)

Meeting The Family Yates

SALLIE and ADDIE YATES, FATHER YATES and MOTHER YATES, hold bibles and listen --

Chang and Eng join the Yates Family at the service --

Canaan joins Chang and Eng listening --

Methodist Minister: (continuing) -- Which did blacken like coal. And thus he remained with black face, Cain did, for he did carry the curse that was blackness -- (continue)

Chang listens to the Minister's words. Eng's attention is on Canaan --

Methodist Minister: (continuing) -- And Ham, son of Noah the builder of the Arc, did have a wife Egyptus, who preserved the curse of Cain through their own son, Canaan.

*6

Canaan: (overlapping) Canaan. That is my name. Canaan.

Minister begins to exit. Sermon transitions into commentary --

As the Minister continues the Yates family does a small tour of the stage, passing by Chang and Eng.

Chang bows as they pass. Father Yates discreetly acknowledges him, Mother Yates turns away. The two daughters giggle and are scolded by the mother --

Methodist Minister: "Cain's posterity gradually became colored. Ham's children also were browner than those of Shem. The nobler races were always of a lighter color. They who were distinguished by a particular mark engendered children of the same stamp; and as corruption increased, the mark also increased until at last it covered the whole body, and people became darker and darker. But yet in the beginning there were no people perfectly black; they became so only by degrees". (7)

Chang: They notice us.

Eng: We were to be discreet, happen to catch the girls' eyes. You practically threw us at the lot of them. These are not one of your paid evenings of entertainment.

Chang: They have filled out nicely over the past year. I know they are not *Chinese* girls Eng, but they walk on their own two feet. Which one do you like? I like the one named Adelaide.

Eng: The mother is big as an elephant...

-- Father Yates struggles to help seat Mother Yates. Addie and Sallie assist. Mother Yates is grossly obese, weighing nearly 500 pounds. She is seated, gasping to catch her breath --

Chang: Chang --

Both: And --

Eng: Eng --

Both: -- Bunker

Mr. Yates: Bunker does not sound Siamese.

Eng: It is American.

Chang: We are Citizens of the United States.

Mr. Yates: Of course. We welcome you to Chapel Hill. You will find us a hospitable community. My wife, Mrs. Nancy Yates, formerly of the Montcrief family --

-- Mrs. Yates nods but avoids looking at them, still catching her breath --

Mr. Yates: Mother, you will kindly...

Mrs. Yates: Oh, our daughters. Adelaide and Sarah Ann.

They curtsy politely --

Chang: It is an honor ladies.

Eng: An honor indeed.

Adelaide: It is an honor to meet you. We read of your travels in the Raleigh Herald Gazette.

Sallie: Pleased to meet you, sirs.

Eng: We hope we do not intrude. After your kind invitation at Church this morning. The Reverend Shelby gave a thoughtful sermon. We do not take you away from other business?

Mrs. Yates: Are you Baptist or Methodist?

Chang: We like to hunt and fish.

Mr. Yates: I should tell you, you are raising quite a few eyebrows with your attempts at scientific farming.

Chang: We experiment with a new tobacco --

Eng: -- Bright Leaf. Two acres for now. More resistant to weevils and produces a more flavorful tobacco --

Father Yates: (to Mother Yates) A waste of time.

Eng: We see your curing sheds are still full. The wet season is upon us.

Father Yates: Waiting my turn at Slocum's Mill. Done by draw, I usually go earlier.

Chang: You do not worry about mildew?

Father Yates: One loses a portion of his crop -- weevil, mildew -- it is to be expected.

Chang: We recently purchased a *Cigarette Press*. You know of it?

Eng: It can produce twice the amount in half the time and the cut is within one-eighth of an inch true to make for easier rolling.

Father Yates: Not everyone around here can afford to be so extravagant.

Eng: You think it costly, however, in time and money saved by doing it ourselves, we should have paid off the Press in two years. The money we would give to Slocum Mill, stays in our pockets. It is something anyone would do if he wishes.

Chang: We ask Mr. Yates if he would like to use our Press?

Father Yates: That is quite generous. I would not want to take away from your using it

--

Eng: We finished our crop several weeks ago. All of it.

Silence.

Chang: We have gifts.

They take out various wrapped *packages* from a bag --

Eng: Mrs. Yates, special confections from London --

Mother Yates: Oh...

Chang: And Mr. Yates. Cigars from Cuba, from our tour last year.

Eng: Gran Teatro, Tacon Teatro – The theaters in Havana are particularly beautiful.

Chang: (indicating the brand) El Rey del Mundo. And if you do not mind. We offer these modest tokens to your lovely daughters.

Father Yates: Of course.

Eng: From Paris. We hoped to visit France on our first tour but their Government would not let us enter --

Chang: -- We might cause pregnant mothers to lose their babies.

Mother Yates: (shocked) Oh, my...

Eng gives Chang an admonishing look --

Addie: Wish I could go to Paris.

Mother Yates: Addie, shush.

Addie: Well, I would. Wouldn't you, Sallie?

Sallie: Maybe.

Chang: Mr. Yates, the Cigarette Press?

Yates: What would be the charge if I may ask?

Eng: You have been gracious in inviting us into your home. Others have not been so generous.

Chang: There is no charge.

Eng: We ask only you invite us back to enjoy your hospitality again.

Chang And Eng And Slavery

Father Yates with a cigar. Canaan (Learned Jack) lights Yates' cigar and stands off to the side –

Father Yates: We are in the South. It is how things are done here. It may seem uncomfortable at first, the notion. But it is in the Bible, the Book of Genesis: *'And the Lord ... did strike Cain's body and face... which did blacken like coal... for he did carry the curse that was blackness'...*

Chang: We can do the work ourselves. We are strong and do not tire.

Eng: If need, we will hire for a small percentage of the cost of ownership.

Father Yates: In the short run perhaps but in a few years it would be paid and you would have free labor for the rest of their lives. It is the only way to make a profit. Something anyone would do if he wishes.

Father Yates exits --

Chang and Eng cross to a *full-length frame, intimating a mirror* as in the Elizabeth Monroe scene.

Chang and Eng dress themselves in front of the mirror.

Canaan assists them --

Chang: There were slaves in Siam.

Eng: They were indentured workers not slaves.

Chang: They were Chinese. Chinese slaves.

No response --

Canaan moves to the other side of the mirror --

Chang: Just like us.

Chang and Eng face the mirror, looking at their imagined reflections .

Canaan stares back at them.

Eng: We are free men.

Chang: They will figure out what we are. They will have a name for us.

Eng: It is the only way to make a profit. It is what they do here.

Canaan steps through the mirror and hands Eng a *letter* --

Canaan: (As Learned Jack commenting on his slave character) For you *massa* --

Eng and Learned Jack/Canaan look at each other for a beat --

Learned Jack exits.

Courting The Yates Sisters

Eng: (opening the letter) They sent it with their brother. It is the second one.

Chang: The father threatened us and the fat one has not stopped crying.

Eng: They want us to see them. It is an ideal transaction, can you think of a better match for us?

Chang: He said he would shoot us if we stepped on his land.

Eng: By the Li'l Shady Creek. They want us to meet them there.

Sallie and Addie enter. We *hear* a stream --

Eng: You do not mind? The way we are?

Addie: You are like a picture somebody cut up --

Sallie: -- and pasted back wrong --

Addie: (correcting) Only it is right.

From here separate simultaneous conversations --

Eng: Sallie?

Sallie: Yes, Mr. Eng?

Eng: I ask again. You do not mind?

Chang: (to Addie) Close your eyes.

Sallie: I have not made up my mind yet.

Addie: We are used to people staring. People stare at our mother when we go into town. My brother beat up the Thackery boy because he called mother names --

Chang: Shhh... (brings Addie's hands to his face) Let your hands know what I look like...

Sallie: If I just look at your face. Nothing else. Otherwise... I am confused.

Eng: Then for now only look at my face. (moving close) How is this?

Sallie observes him close up --

Sallie: Not altogether unpleasing.

Eng: Good. That is a beginning.

Chang guides Addie's hand to his crotch --

Addie: Chang! You devil! I should tell Mama!

Chang: I am sorry, I do not know what got into me --

Addie: (recovering) I do not know how they behave in the rest of the world but that is considered rather forward in Wilkes County.

Sallie: Most boys when they talk to me. They do not see me. When you talk to me. I think you see me.

Eng: I see you, Sarah Jane.

Sallie: That is a beginning, Mr. Eng Bunker.

Addie: Go home for now, Mr. Chang Bunker. I do not feel safe around you.

Lighting Shift --

The Doctor in London --

-- DR. CHAMBERLAIN enters. Chang and Eng lift their shirts exposing their connecting ligature. He examines it --

Dr. Chamberlain: It could prove fatal.

Dr. Chamberlain withdraws --

Addie and Sallie enter --

Chang and Eng, with their shirts up --

Addie steps forward and puts her finger on the naked ligature nearer to Chang.

Sallie watches, *from a few steps away* --

Chang: Sallie? I can feel that.

Eng: Move it a bit more.

Addie: Here?

Eng: Now I can.

Chang: This side I feel --

Eng: And this side I feel. Sallie?

Sallie steps forward. Addie takes Sallie's hand and guides her fingers to touch the ligature near Chang --

Sallie: You feel that?

Chang: Yes.

Sallie looks at Eng --

Eng: No.

Addie slides Sallie's fingers to Eng's side --

Sallie: You feel that?

Chang: No.

Eng: Yes.

Addie: It is like a baby's skin.

Sallie: Is there a place where you both --

Chang: (nodding) Un-huh --

Chang takes Sallie's hand and places her fingers in the middle of the cord.

Chang and Eng both smile at Sallie --

Chang: Does it embarrass you?

Sallie: Not too much.

Sallie and Chang watch each other --

Eng: We make progress.

Addie: It does not embarrass me.

Lighting Shift --

Eng: When you are with me, Chang will be with us.

Chang: We cannot separate.

Eng: You told Addie we cannot marry.

Sallie: I did not say that.

Addie: Yes, you did. You are acting stupid Sallie --

Eng: Addie, please.

Chang: Well, she is.

Eng: Chang, that is enough!

Sallie: We have to figure this out or I can not marry Eng. I can not. Marriage is where only God's eyes should be allowed. If we marry, we marry with God's approval and how can it be when Chang has to be in the room with us.

Eng: You asked us to become Christians and Chang and I have done that for you. To marry is our Christian duty.

Addie: Papa says there is nothing in the bible to stop us. We have been best friends, we always thought when we married we could not be together. But this? Sallie?

Eng: Sallie?

Sallie: Chang, I will love you as my husband's brother. And I will love you as my sister's husband. But in my marriage bed with Eng? I simply cannot abide by that. I told Mama and Papa.

Lighting Shift --

Chang and Eng, Addie and Sallie --

Mother and Father Yates at the edges, observing --

Chang: It is like sleeping with your eyes open. We do it --

Eng: -- to give the other privacy.

Addie: Show us.

Chang *leaves*.

Eng: He has left.

Addie: Chang?

Sallie: You boys are playing with us. Addie, this is a joke.

Eng: We have done this since we were children. It allows Chang to be there and not be there.

Sallie: I do not believe it.

Eng takes out a *pin* and offers it to Sallie. Eng indicates that she should stick Chang. She does --

Sallie: Oh, my...

--Sallie and Addie exit --

Chang: Ow! (beat) Joshin'.

Eng: Did you leave?

Chang: When the time comes, we will honor each other's privacy.

Eng: It is not for us. You heard Sallie. They must have their privacy.

Chang: You worry too much Brother.

The Wedding

A Church. Music --

Chang and Eng getting dressed --

Chang: You are a changed man when you are with Sallie. Could it be the calculating Eng has met his match?

Eng: A successful business transaction. Their combined dowries will allow us to buy two hundred more acres. (beat) Joshing.

Father Yates with Addie and Sallie helping Mother Yates. They are dressed formally for the *wedding* --

Mother: I am sorry. I still find you hideous.

Father: Mother...

Chang and Eng nod --

Chang: (aside to Eng) As we, you...

Methodist Minister lit with a Bible--

Minister: I pronounce you... Husbands and wives --

Father Yates escorts Mother Yates away --

Mother Yates: -- Do they keep their eyes closed when they are supposed to? Or do they peek? Is this not sin in God's eyes? Orgies, orgies, my babies --

Addie and Sallie help Chang and Eng out of their clothes --

A tone of *sensual eroticism* --

-- Addie and Sallie take off their wedding dresses to reveal Victorian undergarments --

Sallie and Eng, move forward. Eng's *Eyes* are *Open* --

Chang lingers to the side and up of Eng. Chang's *Eyes* are *Half-Lidded* (9) -

-- Sallie and Eng begin to undress each other. They enjoy this dance of uncovering. Slow, sensual. They begin to make love --

Chang has *left* --

-- Addie, alone, is impatient and calls to Sallie interrupting Addie's and Eng's love-making --

Addie: Sallie! Hurry up! It has been 3 days - Don't be such a hog!

-- Sallie and Eng do not want to stop but relent. Sallie moves upstage and puts her clothes on --

-- Addie moves beside Chang whose *Eyes* are now *Open*.

Eng is just off Chang's side, his *Eyes* are now *Blank*, his *head drooping*. He has *left* --

-- Addie and Chang undress and begin to make love. *Erotic* --

Sallie: 3 days. Don't forget. Addie? Chang?

Addie and Chang ignore her --

They slowly darken --

Lights up --

Silence. Chang and Eng, Addie and Sallie. They wait anxiously, nervously shifting their positions --

Katherine-Josephine lit in half-light observing -

Addie: How will they look? Half white, half Siamese?

Silence --

Chang: What if they are born like us?

Silence --

TWO MID-WIVES enter. They are pushed together, shoulder to shoulder, carrying *bundled up babies*.

They stand for a beat. Then separate --

#1 Mid-wife hands a baby to Addie --

Addie: Thank you all mighty God, she is normal.

Chang: Can you feel me? Can you feel me?

Eng: I feel you running around in me, Brother --

Chang: Thank you God, thank you.

Addie: Katherine-Josephine...

Katherine-Josephine: (overlapping) Katherine-Josephine --

-- #2 Mid-wife places a *Black Cloth* over the face of the baby and gives it to Sallie -
-

-- stunned silence --

Katherine-Josephine *hums* Amazing Grace --

Sallie: Oh, Rosalind...

Eng: 'Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell.'

Sallie hugs the baby and silently weeps --

Addie: It is God's will.

Chang: There is a reason for everything.

Eng: No, it is not God's will. She got pneumonia, could not breathe and died. Sallie? Sallie?

Sallie: She abides in heaven now Eng.

-- She and Addie move away --

Sallie: She will be buried in the good earth. Not burned like corn husks in a heathen ritual.

Eng: Chang?

Chang: (exiting with Addie) We sell our wares in America. It is what Christians do here.

Eng: (to Katherine-Josephine) Why couldn't it have been you.

Eng and Katherine-Josephine look at each other.

Mother Yates lit *crying* hysterically ---

Mother Yates: Fornication, fornication --

Katherine-Josephine: The Official Family Portrait --

Sarah and Adelaide enter --

-- The CHILDREN enter. As each child enters they call out their names like the *Mouseketeers** and run and position themselves --

Bunker Children: -- Katherine-Josephine, Julia Ann! Stephen Decatur! James Montgomery! Patrick Henry! Rosalyn Etta! William Oliver! Frederick Marshall! Rosella Virginia! Georgianna Columbia! Robert Edmond! --

Katherine-Josephine: No, not done yet. And --

-- Josephine Virginia! Christopher Wren! Nancy Adelaide! Susan Marianna! Victoria!
Louise Emeline! (signs/ deaf without speech), Albert Lemuel! Jesse Lafayette!
(signs/ deaf without speech), Margaret Elizabeth! Hattie Irene! --

-- AUNTIE GRACE, *embodied* by Learned Jack, long time family slave and
beloved surrogate mother to all --

Aunt Grace-Learned Jack: Auntie Grace!

Katherine-Josephine: (to Learned Jack) You look good in dresses.

Auntie-Grace-Learned Jack: Hush, girl.

A MAN appears with a *large camera* --

Katherine-Josephine: Mr. Brady, we are ready --

-- They pose --

Lighting Shift --

Eng: She does not like the bedroom we added for us?

Chang: No, it is not that.

Eng: It is larger than the one we all stayed in --

Chang: She feels each sister should have a separate place --

Lighting shift --

Mathew Brady: No smiling!

Mathew Brady shoots --

Camera: Poof!

Momentary Freeze in a *sepia-toned* light.

The Bunker Children exit --

Chang: She wants her own house.

Eng: The house is her own house.

Chang: Where the river opens up about two acres from here on the Southern boundary. There are hickory trees and a grove of white oak --

Eng: Everything we have is *our own*.

Chang: The bedrooms are on opposite sides of the house anyway.

Eng: Her *own*... You must talk to your wife. Tell her this is not possible. Chang?

-- Addie and Sallie break into the scene carrying a *chair built for two*. Addie wears a coat and hands one to Chang --

Addie: -- She gets to keep the chair and the mahogany chests?

Sallie: You always get everything --

Eng: (to Chang) And whose house will you and I live in?

Chang: Addie, the chests you ordered from Belgium will be here within the month --

Addie: Maybe a month, maybe a year - the seas are unpredictable in winter --

Sallie: Addie's new chests for her perfect sitting room so she catches the morning light whilst sipping her Indian teas --

Addie: You can move the old chests into the sitting room here --

Chang: Addie, leave it be --

Eng: Let Chang have it.

Chang: No, you were the one who had it built --

Eng: You take it.

Addie: Sallie? You and Eng can keep it here --

Eng: Take it!

Silence.

Chang: We should start out. The children are waiting with Aunt Grace. Eng?

Eng: As it is what everyone seems to desire.

Addie: 3 days at our place.

Sallie: 3 days at our place.

Chang: It is time.

Eng *leaves*. He stares out blankly --

Chang: We will take care of him.

Addie: Bye Sallie.

Lighting Shift –

Eng takes out a *pin* and pushes it into his hand --

Eng: All life is suffering --

-- The *crash of cannon* and the *violent rumblings of war* shake the stage --

The WAR --

A large Bed. During the following, the four change into night wear and get into bed together. Each at his or her own pace. They do bed time preparations, take medicines --

Addie: I cannot sleep Sallie my mind keeps going and going --

Sallie: (exiting) I will get your pills --

Chang: We sell the 500 acres along the eastern border, we make enough to buy seed for this year's crop, feed for the horse --

Eng: -- Those 500 acres are not yours. I give the work horse to Canaan so he can make his way north with his family --

Chang: You give the horse to Canaan?

Horse enters up stage.

Addie: (calling) The younger Alderman boy was killed at Gettysburg, did you hear that?

Sallie: (reentering with pills and water) No more talk about this --

Addie: (continuing) -- Martha is half out of her mind --

Chang: With the loss of all the slaves... Canaan alone was worth 600 dollars and you give him our last work horse, too? What has come of your keen business sense? Give away our horse?

-- Eng pulls out a *pistol* and moves upstage --

Addie: -- The Jamieson's boy is fighting up in Appomattox --

Sallie: -- You hear me Addie? Stephen and Christopher are coming home and everything will be just the way it was before --

Eng points at the Horse and fires -- *Gun shot* --

The Horse Head slowly falls to earth.

Chang, Eng, Addie and Sallie watch.

Eng: Now it is nobody's horse.

Chang, Addie, Eng and Sallie in bed. They sleep --

Sallie wakes. Chang wakes and looks over at Sallie. Sallie watches Chang --

Eng wakens and sees Sallie and Chang --

Addie wakens. Sees them --

They all rise and dress.

Addie: Chang?

No response --

Eng: Sallie?

Sallie: No. Never.

Sallie and Addie exit --

Chang: She looks. I do not.

Eng: You lie.

Chang: Are you not tired of being special?

Chang gets on his knees and begins to *pray* aloud. Eng, drinks from the flask --

Eng: You ordered 5 bolts of raw silk from India and additional Por Laranaga cigars --

Chang: I pray.

Eng: You are to tell me before you buy anything. Do you hear me? We do not have the income to afford such things --

Chang: Shut up. I talk to God.

Eng: Who do you think listens? Who do you think listens to you, stupid fool?

Chang ignores him and prays louder --

Eng: Does he get drunk when you drink? Does he bleed the same blood when you are cut? Does he shit next to you? Does he fuck next to you?

Chang: Shut up Eng, do you not have any shame ---

Eng: It is me. Me. Not God. I listen to you I have always listened to you -

Chang: You are not enough you drunken sot -- (cont.)

Eng: (overlapping) No --

Chang: -- you were never enough -- (cont.)

Eng: (overlapping) I do not want to hear this --

Chang: -- you will never be enough ---

Eng: Shut up!

Eng attacks Chang --

It is violent and brutal --

Eng: Maybe God can cut us apart!

Chang: I will pray for it!

They *strangle* each other --

Freeze. Chang and Eng isolated in a shaft of light --

Katherine-Josephine enters --

Katherine-Josephine: Once there was so much love...

Other CHARACTERS observe from the edges --

Katherine-Josephine: They are trying to kill each other. Sometimes Uncle Eng would start it, other times father would. We could not stop them. Not even the older brothers Stephen and Christopher. We would have to send for the police and they would sit with them until --

Lights up. *Unfreeze* --

They break apart gasping --

Katherine-Josephine stays on the edges --

Chang and Eng watch each other as they catch their breaths --

Chang: Katherine-Josephine's illness. It has gotten bad.

Pause.

Eng: How bad?

Chang is silent --

Eng: What about that expensive doctor in Philadelphia?

Chang: Is every thing the weight of the coin with you?

Eng: No, it is not, Chang, I care deeply about Katherine-Josephine. I am being sensible so you do not go throwing money at every quack you hear of --

Chang: 'How can we save money here, cut costs there, get the best deal here' --

Eng: It is what the China Men is, it is what we are --

Chang: It is what the China Men does, not what he is. What he is is a wretched sinner. Who has indulged in sins of flesh, alcohol and godlessness and feels alone and abandoned. And who asks his lord for forgiveness so he might spare his daughter. His beloved daughter. (beat) There is a doctor who has a clinic in Vienna. He is doing experimental treatments.

Eng is silent.

Chang: Eng? Let us talk to Phineas Barnum about a tour of Europe. It is the only way we can afford it. For the child. I am begging you. There is nothing left of us.

Dim to darkness --

1869. The Final Tour.

We hear a crowd, music --

PT Barnum with a large megaphone --

Barnum: -- Welcome to, 'Phineas T. Barnum Presents Chang and Eng - The 1869 Old Friends Tour!'

Chang and Eng lit waving to the crowd. Loud applause and cheers --

Chang and Eng: 'Hello London! It's been a long, long time for us, too!'

-- Out of the audience steps an elderly, well-dressed Black Gentleman --

Eng: Learned Jack?

Chang: We thought...

Learned Jack: I stayed in England.

Eng: Good John?

Learned Jack: He made it into Heaven.

Chang: Good, good.

Eng: They have seen the likes of us. They have named us.

Learned Jack: Caine, Ham, Canaan. 'The devil can cite scripture for its purpose'. As can all of us. Be vigilant. We must be vigilant.

Learned Jack tips his hat and withdraws --

Lighting shift --

The Ship Ride Back

The sound of waves, wind, sailors shouting. Chang and Eng stand on the ship's deck and look out at the sea -

Sailor's Voice: Ho! Starboard lee! Mr. Chang and Mr. Eng, good fortune! Look what accompanies you on your crossing back to the Americas --

Chang and Eng see something in the sky –

Katherine-Josephine lit upstage dressed in an all white Victorian dress holding a parasol.

Gentleman Learned Jack presents her --

Katherine-Josephine: -- a Mollymawk!

The sound cuts away. Silence. Chang and Eng watch --

-- In unison, they follow its flight cutting through the air, up and down, sideways and back. The remarkable physical synchronicity of their youth is evidenced in their subtle movements --

This moment is specific. It is during this that they allow themselves once again to feel the whole of their shared internal lives. It is unspoken. They do not look at each other. This is not a remembrance but an in-the-present moment.

Lighting shift --

Katherine-Josephine: Upon our return from London, my condition took a turn for the worse and I died...

Katherine-Josephine hands an *urn* to Chang who gives it to Addie. They both hold it together.

Chang and Addie bow their heads. They grieve --

Eng *Chants* the *Theravada sutra* --

Chang recites a *Christian Prayer*. (8)

Katherine-Josephine *sings* a *hymnal*/Amazing Grace --

Eng's *Chanting*, Chang's *Praying* and Katherine-Josephine's hymnal *Singing*, weave together. Dissonant, melancholy, religious harmonies. Composed score.

Street life sounds. Lights up --

Streets of New York. Chang and Eng with Addie and Sallie. Addie carries the small *urn* of Katherine-Josephine's ashes. Chang, with a cane, moves considerably slower and Eng accommodates begrudgingly. Someone calls to them --

Barnum: (approaching) Chang! Eng! Chang and Eng Bunker! So good to see you!

Eng: Phineas.

Chang: PT.

Barnum: Mrs. Sarah Bunker and Mrs. Adelaide Bunker. We are all here. Shall we launch another tour?

Sallie: Good afternoon.

Addie nods --

Barnum: What brings you back to New York?

Chang: We take a steamer from here. We visit Siam.

Katherine-Josephine watches --

Addie appears agitated, Sallie touches her shoulder --

Eng: It is a personal matter, Mr. Barnum.

Awkward silence --

Barnum: Well. Then I will offer you good luck. Oh, there is a rumor circulating in London about you both. Remember the story I started about you looking for a doctor to separate you? Evidently it has caught on again you went to see the renowned English surgeon, Dr. Millard Chamberlain --

-- Lighting shift. Barnum becomes Doctor Chamberlain. Chang and Eng raise their shirts. Dr. Chamberlain holds a *scalpel* --

Dr. Chamberlain: -- There is a calculated risk, I would not tell you otherwise. One of you could die, both of you could die. But the most recent research has shown the liver to be a most resilient organ. I believe the operation would be successful. You would be separate. Each truly apart from the other. Free to live your lives on your own --

Dr. Chamberlain waits, *scalpel* poised --

Silence --

OTHERS from their story observe from the shadows --

Dr. Chamberlain: Gentlemen?

Chang: Older Brother?

Eng is silent.

Dr. Chamberlain withdraws.

Chang and Eng isolated together.

Katherine-Josephine: Three years later, my father, who had been in ill health, passed away, leaving my Uncle Eng alone for 5 hours before he died, too.

Chang closes his eyes and his head droops --

The OTHERS who stand around the edges collectively EXHALE as Chang dies --

Katherine-Josephine with Learned Jack observes --

Eng watches Chang for a moment, then moves down stage. Tentative. Eng in a tight shaft of light. Alone. He looks around trying to sense how it feels being without Chang for the first time in his life.

Unsettled. He attempts the Hand Dance by himself...

He cannot complete it --

Silence.

Eng: I will not pray. I do not believe in God. I believe in you Chang. That is enough.

Eng moves to Chang's side and they are conjoined. Their classic pose. Arms around each other's shoulders.

Eng: I have a secret to tell you. (leaning in) I always woke before you.

-- slow fade to black --

END OF PLAY

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Play History

University of North Carolina Winter 2012. Workshop Reading. Academic Advisor. Heidi Kim. Dir. Joseph Megal.

Princeton University. Fall 2012. Reading. Academic Advisor. Anne A. Cheng. Dir. Robert N. Sandberg.

UC Berkeley Dept of Theater, Dance, Performance Studies. Spring 2011. Student Production. Dir. Peter Glazer.
Production underwritten by 2010 Creative Work Fund Grant

UC Berkeley Dept of Theater, Dance, Performance Studies Workshop/Reading Fall 2010

UC Santa Cruz, Dept of Theater and Dance. Spring 2012. Student Production. Dir. Gina Hayes.

American Conservatory Theater Jan. 15 & 16 2010 Workshop Reading. Dir. Michael Barakiva. Producer. Beatrice Basso.

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University of North Carolina Library Chang and Bunker Exhibit and Private Collection.

* MINIMAL CAST CHARACTERS – All actors play multiple roles except Chang and Eng. 10 players plus the Horse.

Actor 1: ENG BUNKER -

Actor 2: CHANG BUNKER –

Actor 3: Katherine-Josephine; Others.

Actor 4: LEARNED JACK; HAM; CANAAN; AUNTIE GRACE;
WASHINGTON'S NANNY.

Actor 5: PHINEAS T. BARNUM; DR. CHAMBERLAIN; THE KING; SIAMESE FATHER.

Actor 6: KATHERINE-JOSEPHINE BUNKER; SALLIE YATES; METHODIST MINISTER; ELI.

Actor 7: ELIZABETH MONROE; AFONG MOY; MOTHER YATES, HALE.

Actor 8: ADDIE YATES; SIAMESE MOTHER; SUSAN COFFIN; WILL; SOMSRI.

Actor 9: GOOD JOHN; ABEL COFFIN; LIM; the SOLICITOR.

Actor 10: CAPTAIN ROBERT HUNTER; KING'S 1ST MINISTER; MR. JOSHUA; SIR CHARLES MANNING.

Actor 11: (optional) HORSE

*6 – Passages pulled from 4th Chapter of the Book of Genesis; Mormon interpretations; Syriac Christianity; an Eastern Christian (Armenian) Adam-book 5th and 6th Century.

*7 Excerpted from writings of German Roman Catholic Augustinian nun Anne Catherine Emmerich.

* Translation of Para Xerxes –

Tender and beautiful fronds
of my beloved plane tree,
let Fate smile upon you.
May thunder, lightning, and storms
never bother your dear peace,
nor may you by blowing winds be profaned.

A shade there never was,
of any plant,
dearer and more lovely,
or more sweet.

8. Book of Common Prayer

O God, the creator and preserver of all mankind, we humbly beseech thee for all sorts and conditions of men... that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.

9. This is an intimation of how the real Chang and Eng and the Yates sisters are believed to have managed their intimate affairs. One brother was supposed to have “left” or “gone blank” while

the other brother was with his wife. Along with that theory is the idea that the deferent brother would comply with everything the other brother wished. 9

*** Correct name – Saartjie Baartman

* -- a Line of Spectators stare: it is critical to establish that initially, Chang and Eng are the observed, objectified with no agency. In the subsequent showing in England C & E change the balance of power. E.g., in this first exhibition, C&E face out to the audience. Upstage of the line of Spectators that stare at their backs. The Spectators are at a higher elevation. Perhaps simply done with C&E bending their knees and the line of Spectators rising on its tip toes.

At the top of Act II when C&E are exhibited in London, begin with the same stage placement. Then, as Chang and begin to assert agency, the Line of Spectators moves down stage of C&E. The Spectators now have their backs to the audience, on a lower elevation, observing. Chang and Eng are above, looking down on them.