

▲ Introduction

continually evolve to embrace ever more apparent diversity and complexity:

Some people think that Asian American theater is a static art form. People think it's about dealing with Angel Island, the railroads, the camps, etc. But our culture is a live beast.

The rise of anti-Asian violence, the devastation caused by the Los Angeles riot, and the smuggling of human cargo from Asia add troubling dimensions to the Asian American experience, ones which add a certain urgency to Gotanda's ongoing work:

Asian America is under siege at this point. Artistically this makes for a volatile but creative situation. The sweeping sense of anti-Asian sentiment means that a lot of new young voices have a need to say something, a reason to say something, a fire to say something. I see all kinds of energy coming from Southeast Asians, second-generation Korean Americans, "mixed race" Asians, and gay and lesbian Asian Americans. They are finding their voice. And it all bodes well for a new resurgent Asian American cultural voice. We have to tell the stories that allow the world to see us on our own terms, not defined by others. We have to force ourselves to be heard, to be seen. Whether it's a poem, a play, or a defiant shout.

Gotanda's work compellingly conveys the hopes, fears, shattered dreams, and triumphs that collectively make up the Asian American experience. It is the telling of an American story in an America that is continually being re-formed:

This can truly be an exciting time. We are all participating in the reinvention of America, from the ground up. As an artist and a citizen of the world, what a grand time to be alive.

Berkeley, California
September 1994

▲
Fish

Head

Soup

Fish Head Soup

First production at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, 1991

DIRECTOR. Oskar Eustis

SCENIC AND LIGHTING DESIGN. Kent Dorsey

COSTUMES. Lydia Tanji

SOUND DESIGN. James LeBrecht

ORIGINAL COMPOSITION. Dan Kuramoto

STAGE MANAGER. Meryl Lind Shaw

FIGHT DIRECTOR. Michael Cawelti

Cast

PAPA IWASAKI. Alberto Isaac

DOROTHY IWASAKI. Dian Kobayashi

MAT IWASAKI. Stan Egi

VICTOR IWASAKI. Kelvin Han Yee

Fish Head Soup received a workshop as part of the Mark Taper Forum's New Work Festival in 1989. Gordon Davidson was the artistic director. It was also included in workshops at the Sundance Institute, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, and Berkeley Repertory Theatre.

Second production of *Fish Head Soup*

East West Players in association with the Mark Taper Forum,
January 1993

DIRECTOR. Oskar Eustis

PRODUCER. Nelson Handel

SCENIC DESIGN. David Hoffman

LIGHTING DESIGN. Richard Hoyes

MUSIC COMPOSITION. Dan Kuramoto

SOUND DESIGN. Gino Chang

COSTUMES. Christine Souza

PROPS. Ken Takemoto

STAGE MANAGER. Yuki Nakamura

FIGHT DIRECTOR. Randy Kovitz

Cast

PAPA IWASAKI. Sab Shimono

DOROTHY IWASAKI. Nobu McCarthy*

VICTOR IWASAKI. Nelson Mashita

MAT IWASAKI. Stan Egi

*Dian Kobayashi took over the role during run.

Author's thanks to Sharon Ott, Peter Brosius, Nobu McCarthy,
Rick Shiomi, Anthony Taccone, Robert Egan, and David Kranes.

Very special thanks to my friend Oskar Eustis, who shepherded this
along from beginning to end.

Characters

TOGO IWASAKI, "PAPA," Japanese American, mid-sixties in age, seemingly mentally ill

DOROTHY IWASAKI, his wife, in her middle fifties but still attractive, waitress in a Japanese restaurant

VICTOR IWASAKI, their older son, in his mid to late thirties, tour-bus driver for a Japanese hotel, Vietnam veteran

MAT IWASAKI, their younger son, late twenties to early thirties

Voices of THREE YOUTHS

VIET CONG SOLDIER

The voice of a DRILL SERGEANT

Time

Late fall, into winter, 1989.

Place

Town in the San Joaquin Valley, California.

Settings

ACT ONE. The Iwasaki house, Friday evening to Saturday morning.

ACT TWO. The Iwasaki house and various locales around the town, Saturday evening.

ACT THREE. The Iwasaki house and various locales around the town, Sunday.

Act One

Lights up on VICTOR and PAPA. It's very wet and foggy outside. They've just returned from a church memorial service. VICTOR is helping PAPA into his overstuffed chair. VICTOR has a pager in his belt. PAPA starts to jerk his hands up and down in front of him, mouthing "Mat." VICTOR notices and gently grabs his hands, stopping him. He lets go and PAPA starts again. VICTOR stops him. VICTOR and PAPA look at each other. VICTOR slowly releases his hands. He watches. PAPA doesn't move his hands.

DOROTHY enters through the front door with a dripping umbrella and crosses to the upstage bathroom.

DOROTHY: How is he? Is he all right now?

VICTOR (*nodding*): Un-huh.

DOROTHY: I can't believe he acted like that . . . (*She goes into the bathroom and puts the umbrella into the shower stall.*)

DOROTHY (*calling from inside*): The toilet seems fine, Victor, it's not running, I don't see why you're making such a fuss about it . . .

(VICTOR helps PAPA out of his wet coat. DOROTHY reenters.)

DOROTHY (*taking off coat*): And in front of all those people—Mat's baseball coach, what's his name, big tall fellow . . .

VICTOR: Mr. Guilfoyle.

(DOROTHY moves to the corner table with a small obutsudan [Buddhist shrine] sitting on top of it.)

DOROTHY: . . . Yes, yes, he was there, and Mr. Sanders the principal, Mrs. Thompson his debate teacher—they all came up and talked to me so nicely you know, before the



Kelvin Han Yee as Victor and Stan Egi as Mat in the world premiere of Fish Head Soup, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, February 1991
Photo by Ken Friedman, courtesy Berkeley Repertory Theatre



Stan Egi (Mat) and Kelvin Han Yee (Victor) in Fish Head Soup
Photo by Ken Friedman,
courtesy Berkeley Repertory Theatre

Act One

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Fish memorial service began. After all this time they still remember . . . (*Fingering MAT's photo*) and then he jumps up and starts screaming and yelling . . .

Head VICTOR: I was watching him, okay, Mama.
(*VICTOR begins wiping PAPA's face.*)

Soup DOROTHY: I was so embarrassed, all those folks there, wanting to show how much they loved and respected Mat and he gets up and starts to do that. I think he does it on purpose. Did you do it on purpose, Papa? Huh? To embarrass me in front of all those people . . .

VICTOR: He didn't, Mama.

DOROTHY: How do you know? Who knows what goes on inside of there? Besides, you said you'd keep an eye on him.

VICTOR: I was, I said I was watching . . .

DOROTHY: It's bad enough they have to sit there in a Buddhist church, incense smelling up the place, all that mumbo jumbo sutra chanting. I mean, it's okay for us Japanese, we're used to it. But they have to sit there breathing in that stuff and then they have to go up there in front of everyone and gassho . . . (*Starts to laugh*) Did you see Mr.—what did you say his coach's name was . . .

VICTOR: Guilfoyle.

DOROTHY: Right, right, he's so tall he nearly bumped his head on that lantern near the shrine and then he didn't know what to do with the incense . . . (*Stops laughing, looking at PAPA. VICTOR is combing PAPA's hair.*) And then he starts doing that thing with his hands. (*Upset*)

DOROTHY: You have to go in today?

VICTOR (*shaking head*): Un-uh. I called in.
(*DOROTHY watches PAPA for a beat.*)

DOROTHY: Victor, the toilet's fine. Okay, Victor? Victor?

VICTOR (*nodding*): Un-huh.

DOROTHY: I have to get dressed.
(*DOROTHY turns and exits into the back hallway.*)
(*VICTOR stands there for a moment, then pulls out a large*

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Fish wrench from his back pocket. Grips it, staring down at PAPA. Then turns and disappears into the upstage bathroom door. We begin to hear the banging of pipes coming from within.)

Head (*Lights fade to black. VICTOR's banging changes into a watery, echoing din. We hear a droning sound. PAPA lit in a pool of light standing on top of his chair. Staring out, he begins to jerk his hands up and down wildly as if snagging with an imaginary fishing pole.*)

Soup PAPA (*calling in a raspy voice*): Mat. Mat. Mat . . .
(*Upstage, the silhouette of a man is brought up in a bluish watery shaft of light. Drowning in very slow motion—grasping upwards, mouth and eyes gaping.*)

DOROTHY (*off*): Victor!
(*Lights immediately up on the house. Sound cuts away. PAPA stands, disoriented, on his chair, perched precariously. VICTOR is emerging from the bathroom carrying a toilet in his arms, struggling to make his way carefully to the hallway. PAPA starts to fall.*)

DOROTHY (*off*): Victor! Victor!
(*VICTOR notices PAPA falling, hurriedly puts down the toilet. Starts to move towards PAPA when his pager goes off. Unable to make up his mind—should he phone in or catch his father? The pager continues to beep and his father continues to totter. He rushes over and catches PAPA just before he falls. DOROTHY speaks the following during the above described action.*)

DOROTHY (*off*): Know what I hate most about going to work this time of year? Know what? The fog. Know what I hate second most? Driving in this fog. It's so scary, can't see more than a few feet in front of you. And you can't slow down 'cause those damn semis will run you right off the road. So what do you do? You can't go forward 'cause you can't see but you have to keep going forward or you'll get run over—so what do you do, huh? What do you do?
(*VICTOR puts PAPA back in his chair, then hurries to the phone, checking the phone number on the beeper.*)

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Fish VICTOR (*phoning*): Hello, Mr. Toyama? Mr. Toyama-san?
 . . . Yes, moshi-moshi, yes it's . . . Yes, moshi-moshi, Vic-
 Head tor desu . . . Hai, hai . . . I'm, uh, uh . . . boku wa very
 busy desu . . . Not suppose to be on call today, desu, call
 Soup the office desu . . . Yes, yes, sayonara desu . . .
 (VICTOR hangs up and goes back to his toilet moving.)
 DOROTHY (*off*): Victor!
 (VICTOR, struggling with the toilet, ignores her calls.
 PAPA is climbing back up on his chair, teetering.)
 DOROTHY (*off*): Victor! Victor!
 (VICTOR sees PAPA starting to fall again. His pager starts
 beeping. Momentary confusion, then rushes over just as
 PAPA begins to slip off the chair. They tumble to the
 ground in a heap this time. Dorothy, dressed in a kimono,
 enters from the back hallway, awkwardly walking in
 ministeps owing to the constraints of the kimono.)
 DOROTHY: Victor, you have to keep an eye on him, you just
 can't . . . there's no telling what he'll do . . .
 VICTOR (*helping Papa up*): Yeah, but I'm trying to . . . (*Con-
 tinues.*)
 DOROTHY (*overlapping*): What's that sound?
 VICTOR: . . . fix the toilet and then I'm supposed to be
 watching Papa . . .
 DOROTHY (*interrupts*): It's not broken, Victor . . . (*Spots the
 ripped-out toilet sitting on the floor*)
 VICTOR (*shutting off beeper*): And my clients are calling
 me . . .
 DOROTHY (*staring*): What the hell did you do . . . Victor,
 didn't I tell you . . .
 (DOROTHY turns back to VICTOR and sees PAPA moving
 his hands again in an agitated fashion.)
 DOROTHY (*unnerved*): Victor, he's doing it again. He's doing
 it again, Victor . . .
 (VICTOR hurriedly stops PAPA. DOROTHY tries to
 compose herself.)
 DOROTHY: I have to go to work. (*Turns to leave*)

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VICTOR: You coming home late again?
 DOROTHY: Look, we just need the money, okay? I can't help
 Fish it. Ice cream executives. A special party or something.
 PAPA: Mama. I want Mama. I want Mama. Mama? Head
 (DOROTHY looks at PAPA for a beat. Something in her
 softens. Crosses to him, smiling.)
 DOROTHY (*reaching in to stroke his cheek*): Here I am, silly,
 Mama's right . . .
 PAPA (*knocks her hand away*): I want Mama. I want Mama.
 (They stare at each other for a beat. She starts to adjust
 his clothing. He resists and tries to push her hands away,
 but she overpowers him, forcing him to sit still while
 she adjusts his clothing. She speaks during the above
 struggle.)
 DOROTHY: He started walking when he was just eight
 months old. I mean, really walking. Everyone was amazed.
 And when I took him to swimming lessons, like a minnow,
 just like a little minnow. Everyone right away started talk-
 ing about the Olympics. And they were always trying to
 skip him—second grade, fifth grade—but Daddy wouldn't
 let them. Just wouldn't let them. Said it was showing
 off, "What would other people think, putting our kid
 ahead like that?" (*Finishes. Beat. Catching her breath.*) Mat
 would've been something very important by now. Some-
 thing high up, like one of those international business bro-
 kers between Japan and America . . .
 (DOROTHY hikes up her kimono between her legs and
 turns to leave.)
 DOROTHY (*muttering to herself as she exits awkwardly*): Why
 do they make them like this, you can barely move. Damn
 thing . . .
 (VICTOR watches her leave, then turns back to PAPA.
 Notices he's upset.)
 PAPA: Mat's not my son, Mat's not my son . . .
 VICTOR (*comforting him*): Papa? We were climbing this tree.

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Fish You know, Mat and me? And Mat kept going higher and higher. “Stop, Mat, you crazy? Come back down.” I was scared ’cause we were way up there you know, and if anything happened to him, Mama always blamed me, always.
Head I kept telling Mat, “Come back, come back down,” but you know Mat, he just kept going up and up. And then I fell. I broke my arm. Mat came down and looked at me.
Soup He started crying. Mama got so mad at me. “What if Mat broke his neck and killed himself?” *(Beat)* Sometimes I dream about him. Mat. He’s somewhere far away, Papa. He’s happy, too. And he’s so high up, the world could never pull him back. Never pull him under . . .

PAPA *(sadly shakes his head back and forth)*: Victor’s house, Victor’s house . . .

VICTOR: No, no, Papa’s house. Papa’s house . . .

(Dim to darkness on VICTOR and PAPA.)
(Night. Iwasaki house. Foggy outside. Shadowy figure enters through the window, flashlight and carry bag in hand. Late 20s to early 30s, dressed like a cross between a Japanese gangster and a sleazy Hollywood producer. Appears as if he’s been up for several days, unshaven, hair unkempt. Flashes light around. Begins picking up objects, touching them, inhaling their smells. Picks up a vase, quietly studies it for a beat, then playfully tosses it from one hand to the other hand. Crosses to PAPA’s chair. Notices PAPA’s hat sitting on the seat. Picks it up, examining it, and then puts it on. He sits in the chair. Lights come up abruptly. VICTOR is standing by the light.)

MAT: Hi, Victor.

(Silence. VICTOR stares, wide-eyed.)

MAT: It’s me.

(More silence. VICTOR continues to stare.)

MAT *(moving towards VICTOR)*: It really is, Victor, it’s . . .

VICTOR *(raising wrench threateningly)*: Stay back . . .

(MAT stops.)

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 MAT: I know this is a bit of a shock—I mean, after all this time and everything. But it’s me.

(VICTOR, desperately confused, begins to make high-pitched whimpering sounds.)

MAT *(worried)*: No, no, don’t do that, Victor, don’t do that . . . you’re all right, you’re all right, you’re going to be just fine . . .

(VICTOR starts to move around the house with MAT following him.)

VICTOR: See, see, I’m fixing the house, I am ’cause it’s all broken down and rotting and Mat can’t see up, ’cause he’s so high up and it’s all beneath the surface, inside the walls under the floors and I’m ripping it out, ripping . . .
(Continues.)

MAT *(overlapping)*: Calm down, calm down. It looks great, you’re doing a great job, you are . . .

VICTOR: . . . it out, the pipes all leaky, all the wiring, making it better, making it better. See, see inside, inside here . . .
(Continues.)

MAT *(overlapping, moving closer)*: It is me, Victor. It’s me, Mat. I’m back, Mat’s back . . .

VICTOR: . . . all copper pipes, all copper pipes, all copper . . . NO!

(VICTOR swings his wrench wildly at MAT.)

MAT *(ducking)*: Victor, what the hell you . . .

(PAPA enters from the hallway.)

PAPA: Mat? Mat, is that you?

(MAT notices PAPA’s strange appearance.)

MAT: Yeah, it’s me, Papa . . .

(PAPA stares at MAT.)

PAPA: You kids better go to bed now. I want to get an early start tomorrow. Victor, tell Mama I want fried chicken and onigiri.* More salt, too, on the rice—not enough salt last time. *(Beat)* Who knows? Maybe we’ll get lucky this

*Rice balls.

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time and catch him. Yeah. Haul him in kicking and screaming like some big striped bass.

Fish

MAT: Papa, it's me. Mat. I'm back.

Head

(PAPA stares at MAT.)

PAPA: Mama? Mama! Where the hell is she? It's 1:30 in the morning, where the hell is she, Victor?

Soup

VICTOR: She has to work late sometimes.

PAPA: Victor, make sure all the equipment is loaded into the car. And don't forget the chum I got frozen in the icebox.

Oh, and pack my old pole, too. (To MAT) It's yours now.

(PAPA turns and walks to the hallway. Stops and turns to MAT.) Aren't you dead?

VICTOR: Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu . . .

(PAPA turns and exits. Lights begin a slow fade. VICTOR withdraws into the shadows, continuing to watch MAT.

MAT is isolated in a pool of light. VICTOR fades to black.)

(MAT lit alone.)

MAT: I didn't like myself. I didn't like anything about myself. No. I hated myself. Yes. Hated. I hated my yellow face. My flat nose. The name that no one could ever pronounce correctly. So I got rid of them. Got rid of them and started all over. From the ground up. This time it was going to be my way, my creation.

(Fade in) I became Italian. I went on a fruit and water diet, worked out religiously on various contraptions of self-torture. My butt was so taut and my pants so tight you could have skied off the drop. But the rest of me? No curves, no soft lines. Only angles. Sleek angles and sharp edges. And I would purposely walk down the darkest alleys in the most dangerous parts of town knowing not a soul would touch me because I was like a shiny stiletto cutting this way and that way . . . My name was Paolo. I loved saying it. It was like some exotic bird taking flight off my tongue. And when other people said it, "Paolo? Paolo?"—"Yes?" . . . I was a million miles from here.

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(Looks back at PAPA's hat on his chair)

But then, after a while, it began to sound like my old name. Feel like my old name. Someone would say, "Paolo?" and I would hear your voice calling me through it. So I changed it again. I became Joaquim. Joaquim dressed in black exclusively, drank only espresso, and spoke with an accent that could have been Peruvian, that could have been Panamanian, but that could not have been, nor ever be, mistaken for Japanese . . . (Moves towards chair) But then I started to hear you again. Every time someone said my new name—"Joaquim?" "Joaquim?"—I could almost feel your voice. Your voice, like a big hand reaching right out through it and grabbing me by the scruff of the neck—"Mat, Mat" . . .

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(Pause.)

Then one night as I lay in bed, I began to change . . . (Lighting change) My head pushes out forward, grows long, and my eyes move to the sides of my head. My body elongates like a shiny torpedo. And the trick to the whole thing is my tail. And the two fins on the sides of my head. (Starts to move around) I begin to move with a knowing. I mean, I don't know but I know. My body just seems to be . . . (Continues.)

(PAPA and VICTOR lit upstage in a shadowy light. PAPA stands shivering in a wide-rimmed bucket, filled with water. PAPA is naked. VICTOR dips a small container into the bucket to get water, then pours it over the body of PAPA. As it touches his skin he makes a mournful high-pitched wailing sound. It intermingles with the sound of the water splashing into the bucket.)

MAT: . . . leading me, taking me somewhere. Turn here, turn there, go straight here . . . Piece of cake, I'm on automatic pilot, I've been doing this forever—Look, Ma, no hands! Wait, wait, what's this? Up ahead, I hear a growing roar. Then I see it . . . The rapids . . . The current picks up, I'm

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being swept along . . . Suddenly I'm pulled under, tumbling and rolling along the bottom, pebbles like tiny razors scraping at my skin. (*Breaks through surface gasping for air*) Ahhh . . . What's this . . . Rocks! Big, small, jagged—leap out like flying car fenders! Ouch! (*Bangs into furniture, knocking things over*) Ahh! Ahhh! Leap high, high out of the water! Then deep, deep, deep . . . Finally, I surface. Over there, a quiet pool of water beneath a shady tree. (*Pulls himself along floor now*) My left side has a deep gash, my dorsal fin is ripped. But I must keep going . . . Then I see something . . . yes, yes, I know this place . . . There, I recognize that street, it's where I used to play as a kid. And, and that gas station, I used to fill up the air in my bicycle tires there . . . And those maple trees . . . And there, on the corner, I see it . . .

(*MAT passes out on the ground. PAPA and VICTOR dim to darkness.*)

(*DOROTHY enters house in semi-darkness, trying not to make noise. All dressed up, carrying shoes. She stumbles on MAT's sleeping body.*)

MAT (*waking up*): Mom?

(*DOROTHY sees him.*)

DOROTHY: AAHHH! (*Silence. DOROTHY stares as MAT gets up.*)

MAT: Mom?

(*MAT slowly approaches DOROTHY. He reaches out and embraces her. She is rigid with shock. She slowly comprehends the situation.*)

DOROTHY (*embracing him*): Mat, Mat, you're alive. My baby's . . . (*Continues.*)

MAT (*overlapping*): It's all right, Mama, it's all right. I'm back. Mat's home.

DOROTHY: . . . alive. My baby's come back to me. Mat, Mat, Mat . . .

(*DOROTHY stops, suddenly angry. She starts to attack*

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him, striking at him. MAT has to grab her flailing arms as they whack at him.)

DOROTHY: How could you? Do you know what you put us through? Do you know? Do you? He just stood by the river, by the river all night . . . (*Can't take it, breaks down, reaching out and embracing him again*) Mat, Mat, Mat . . . (*As MAT stands there being held by DOROTHY, lights fade to half. PAPA enters, dressed in his worn robe and holding a bowl of mush. He makes his way across the room towards his chair. His slow movements and blank expression give his appearance an eerie quality. MAT watches this strange apparition that is his father move across the room. A weeping DOROTHY continues to cling to him.*)

MAT: Mama? Mama?

(*DOROTHY looks up.*)

MAT: It's the middle of the night. Where were you?

(*They stare at each other. Fade to black.*)

Lights up full on the house. Morning. PAPA is seated in his chair, napkin around his neck, eating. VICTOR is trying to straighten up all the tipped-over furniture. MAT stands drinking coffee, staring at PAPA.

VICTOR (*cleaning up*): What happened here last night?

(*MAT is silent, continues to stare at PAPA.*)

VICTOR: Look at this place, it's a mess.

MAT: I had a bad dream.

VICTOR (*continuing to clean, watching MAT looking at PAPA*):

I got a job now. At a hotel. I'm a driver. I drive people around. Japanese. It's a Japanese hotel. They just built it . . .

MAT: That's all he does? I mean, he just sits there?

(*No response.*)

MAT: I mean, can he carry on a conversation? Can he do things?

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VICTOR: "Do things"?

Fish MAT: Yeah, yeah, you know, stuff around the house—take care of bills, sign things . . .

Head VICTOR: Don't touch him! *(Beat)* It's my job, okay? Okay, Mat?

Soup *(VICTOR moves to PAPA's side, takes the spoon away from him and begins to spoon-feed PAPA himself. DOROTHY enters from the hallway. Stands by the corridor and watches MAT.)*

MAT: What's going on here, Victor?

VICTOR: I kept telling Mama we'd get a postcard from you. From some far-off land. You'd have a funny hat on and be wearing a grass skirt and it'd say, "Love, Mat." But after a couple of months . . .

MAT: Victor, Victor, listen to me. He's sitting there like a goddamn zombie, you're feeding him like he was a baby or something. I mean, did you take him to a doctor or anything?

VICTOR: Yeah.

MAT: And?

VICTOR: And, what?

MAT: What did they say, Victor? What's wrong with him?

VICTOR: Nothing's wrong with him.

MAT: What do you mean, "Nothing's wrong with him"?

Look at him, Victor, look at him!

VICTOR: Don't yell, Mat, don't yell at me.

MAT: I'm not yelling, Victor, I'm not . . . *(Continues.)*

VICTOR *(overlapping)*: That's just the way he is now, that's just the way he is!

MAT: . . . yelling at you. I just want to know what kinds of things he can do . . .

(MAT and VICTOR interrupted as DOROTHY walks in. Silence as she moves to stove to get coffee.)

DOROTHY *(at stove)*: Sometimes he looks right at you and speaks. He says your name and everything. He seems fine,

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you know. And then you start to talk to him and you realize you're not talking to anyone.

(MAT watches her pouring her coffee.)

MAT: You sleep okay?

DOROTHY: Un-huh. You?

MAT: Good.

DOROTHY: The couch was okay then?

MAT: No, no, it was fine.

DOROTHY: It's just your room . . . Papa uses it.

MAT: The couch was okay, really.

DOROTHY: Because of the way he is now, Mat.

(Awkward pause. MAT crosses room.)

MAT *(looking into a door)*: Where's the toilet? Who took the toilet?

VICTOR: Don't touch anything in there.

DOROTHY: I keep telling him it's fine the way it is.

VICTOR: No, it isn't, Mom. The water was running.

MAT *(coming out)*: What'd you do with the toilet, Victor?

VICTOR: I'm fixing it, okay?

MAT: Then fix it, don't just leave it—there's nothing in there now. Just a big hole.

DOROTHY: Just use the bathroom in the back, Mat. The one in the hallway.

(MAT stares at VICTOR and DOROTHY for a beat, then exits shaking his head. DOROTHY moves to table.)

DOROTHY *(to VICTOR)*: I tried to sleep, I couldn't. I'd close my eyes, nothing would happen. Then I'd think I was dreaming the whole thing and come out and look at Mat. I did that all night. Just watching him.

(MAT returns. He's splashed water on his face and head. Slicks back his wet hair with his hands.)

MAT: Ahh, that feels better. More coffee. *(Gulps down rest of coffee and goes to get another cup)* You know what part of my body feels the best in the morning? You know what part? *(Beat)* These. *(Laughing, holds up his bare foot)* I've

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Fish been wearing these new Japanese shoes. Got 'em in L.A. They're so pointy, they're like knives. I'm in a dark alley, someone jumps me? (*Kicks*) Hah! Dead. But they're killing my feet.

Head (*MAT laughs at his own joke. Notices DOROTHY and VICTOR are not laughing. Embarrassed silence.*)

Soup DOROTHY (*upset.*)

DOROTHY (*quietly*): Is that where you've been? In Los Angeles?

(*Awkward beat.*)

MAT: Most the time, yeah.

(*Pause.*)

DOROTHY: What have you been doing?

(*Slight pause.*)

MAT: Things. All kinds of things.

DOROTHY: Well, all this time . . . I mean, what do you do now? You've been gone for almost, what? How many years have you been . . .

MAT: Oh, oh, I'm an actor. You know, like in the movies, TV?

DOROTHY: An actor?

MAT: Un-huh.

(*DOROTHY and VICTOR exchange looks.*)

VICTOR: I've never seen you.

MAT: Well, it's been a bit slow. I did a couple commercials.

VICTOR: I watch TV all the time. I've never seen you.

MAT: I said it's been a bit slow, Victor, okay?

DOROTHY: An actor? But Mat . . . All this time . . .

(*MAT gets up and goes to sink to wash hands.*)

MAT: I get to be all these different people, Mom. People I could never be in real life. That's what makes it so much fun. I can play anyone.

(*DOROTHY watches MAT vigorously washing hands.*)

DOROTHY: Mat? Why? Why'd you do it?

(*MAT can't respond. Awkward silence. VICTOR watches.*)

Act One

▲

DOROTHY: I was telling Victor how during the night? I would come out and watch you. One time—this is kind of silly—I thought you stopped breathing. I did. I got so scared. I bent down real close to you to see if you were still alive. I was listening. Trying to hear your heart. Silly, huh? (*DOROTHY starts to cry.*)

VICTOR: Mama? You okay, Mama? (*Getting up and going to DOROTHY*): Mama, don't cry. Please don't cry.

DOROTHY (*waving VICTOR away*): I'm all right, I'm all right. (*Pause.*)

MAT: I just did a movie. Mom? A movie, I did one. Just like in the theaters—big budget, everything. And we shot it in Japan. Tokyo. We shot it on location there. Flew me in there, put me up in a nice hotel. (*MAT takes out snapshots and shows them to DOROTHY.*)

DOROTHY (*composing herself*): A movie?

MAT: Yeah, yeah—I played the lead. Well, there're two of us actually. A man and a woman—a love story, you know the usual stuff. I kept thinking, wouldn't it be nice if Mom were here. To see me.

DOROTHY (*looking*): In Japan?

MAT (*nodding*): Un-huh—see, that's her, the blond girl. Some of the crew, that's the director . . .

DOROTHY (*noticing, excitedly*): It's you.

MAT: Un-huh, yeah. And you can be a celebrity there overnight. I mean it, really. I walk down the street, people jump all over me there. I'm not exaggerating—tear my clothes off, I'm standing there almost naked, they're taking pictures, shooting video. I'm practically famous in Japan, almost a movie star.

DOROTHY (*holding photos*): Look, Victor, look. (*Back to MAT*) Japanese are just too smart, huh. Whatever they want to do—cars, TVs, no one can keep up with them. I keep telling Victor, learn to speak Japanese, go work for the Japanese.

Fish

Head

Soup

Act One

▲

Fish VICTOR (*moving back to feed PAPA*): I am, I am, Mama.
(DOROTHY *shrugs, unimpressed. She stares at MAT for a beat.*)

Head MAT: What?
(*Dorothy moves to Mat and starts to take his coat off.*)

Soup MAT: What are you doing?
DOROTHY: This coat, Mat, really.
MAT: I like it, it cost a lot of—
DOROTHY: Shhh, shhh . . . Remember that favorite sport coat of yours? The one you used to wear to all the awards dinners?
MAT: Yeah? . . .
DOROTHY: Victor, go get it. Victor?
VICTOR: I've been wearing it to work now, Mama . . .
DOROTHY (*impatient*): Oh, never mind . . . (*Hurries off to get it herself*)
DOROTHY (*exiting*): Where did we get that jacket? . . . Bravo and McKeegan on Pacific Avenue, that's where I bought it . . .
MAT (*calling after her*): Really, Mom, if Victor's using it now it's no big . . .
(*MAT and VICTOR stare at each other uneasily.*)
DOROTHY (*off, excitedly*): Oh, and here's your old tuxedo, the one you wore to the senior prom with Lucy Snow . . . (*Enters, with coat and tux*) Papa said to rent, but who wants to wear somebody else's clothes? . . . Besides I figured Victor might need it someday, huh Victor? (*DOROTHY starts to put it on MAT.*)
MAT (*resisting*): Mom, really I don't want to . . . I—
(*Continues.*)
DOROTHY (*overlapping*): Come on, you'll look so good in—
MAT (*jerk his arm*): —don't, really I DON'T!
(*Silence. DOROTHY holds arm as if she's been hurt.*)
VICTOR: Mama?

Act One

▲

DOROTHY: Last night. When Mat came home . . .
VICTOR: It's all— (*Continues.*)
DOROTHY (*overlapping*): Black and blue, yes . . .
VICTOR: —bruised.
MAT: I'm sorry, I didn't know I was that rough.
DOROTHY: It's all right, baby.
MAT: I'm sorry, Mama, really I'm sorry.
DOROTHY: It's all right, Mat. It's all right? (*Pause*) When I first had you? These spots appeared on you. I thought, "Mat's special, my baby's got a special mark." (*Beat*) The doctors called the police, took us in. They thought we were beating you. (*Beat*) A lot of oriental babies get these spots. Nothing special. Quite ordinary actually.
(*DOROTHY looks at MAT for a beat, then turns away. Silence. DOROTHY quietly sips coffee. VICTOR motions for MAT to put the coat on. MAT puts it on.*)
VICTOR: How does it look? Mom?
DOROTHY: Hmmm?
MAT: What do you think? How do I look?
DOROTHY: You put on a little weight, huh?
MAT: Yeah, well . . .
DOROTHY: You look kind of fat, huh Victor? (*Beat*) But you still look good. Handsome. Very handsome. Let's see if the tux still fits you. (*DOROTHY starts to lead MAT away. Notices PAPA refusing to eat.*) Victor, he's had enough.
VICTOR: He hasn't eaten enough. He has to eat yet, Mama.
MAT (*moving towards Victor*): If he doesn't want to eat, don't force him. Victor?
VICTOR (*trying to contain himself*): I'm not forcing him, he hasn't eaten enough, okay? I can take care of—
(*Continues.*)
DOROTHY (*overlapping, leading MAT away*): Let him alone, let him alone Mat, he knows how to handle him . . .
VICTOR: —Papa now, I know how to take care of him, all right? . . . (*As lights dim, DOROTHY and MAT are in the*

Fish

Head

Soup

Act One

Fish

kitchen where they can be heard laughing in half-light. VICTOR continues to stubbornly feed PAPA, gets upset at PAPA's refusal to eat, starts to force the food into his mouth.) Eat, eat . . . (Catches himself and stops, ashamed. Begins to gently wipe PAPA's mouth with the napkin.)

Head

(Dim to darkness.)

Soup

(PAPA lit.)

PAPA: Remember how I used to take the kids out to Ojii-chan's farm and show them around? From over there to over there, that's all Grandpa's land. Biggest in the whole San Joaquin Valley. They don't care, they just want to pick up the potatoes and throw them at each other. I have to bawl them out. See this? This isn't a potato, this is your college education, and this one here is your son's college education. They don't understand. They think Papa's crazy. They say, "No, no, Daddy, it's just a potato." I should take them out there, huh. Let them look at Grandpa's farm . . . (Dining room table lit.)

DRILL SERGEANT'S VOICE: Private Iwasaki? Get your ass up here! We need you again!

(VICTOR runs into light holding a hammer.)

DRILL SERGEANT'S VOICE: Atten-hut! (Pause, thinking)

No, no . . . Get up on this chair. Yeah, stand on this chair so they can all see you. Come on, come on, chop, chop, chop.

(VICTOR gets up on the table and stands at attention.)

DRILL SERGEANT'S VOICE: Atten-hut! Boys, pay close attention. This is the gook enemy. Black hair, yellow skin, slanty eyes . . . Atten-hut!

(DOROTHY enters, putting on her kimono. PAPA sits in his chair in the shadows. DOROTHY sees VICTOR.)

DOROTHY: What are you doing up there?

(VICTOR notices where he is. Confused for a beat, then steps down.)

DOROTHY (cautious): Victor?

(Pause.)

Act One

VICTOR: You say, "Japanese is good"?

DOROTHY: Well, yeah . . . (Pause. DOROTHY concerned.)

Fish

Victor? (No response. MAT lit upstage in half-light looking at the house.) It's good to have him back, huh? (VICTOR stares at MAT for a beat, then turns away.) Well, I think it's wonderful. The best thing for this family.

Head

Soup

VICTOR: He doesn't have to say anything. He just stands there and he makes me feel bad.

DOROTHY: Victor? Listen to me. Things are good now. It hasn't been easy, but it's good now. For both of us. You know that, right? Look, look around—you get to work on the house all day long. And you have a job now, too. And now that Mat's back it's going to be even better. You'll see. You'll see, Victor.

VICTOR: Maybe he can help out then. You know, so you can stay home with Papa. So you don't have to work so late all the time.

(VICTOR and DOROTHY stare at each other for a beat.

VICTOR exits. Lights come up full on rest of house and MAT as DOROTHY watches VICTOR leave.)

MAT: I was in the middle of a scene, this was on the second day of shooting. This weird kitchen scene, the director's idea. And I was feeling kind of funny about it. When the smells of this house . . . You know, like during Thanksgiving—the turkey, stuffing, steamy rice smothered in your gravy, and Papa's striped bass sashimi that he'd just caught laid out next to Auntie Lila's apple pie—it all came flooding back to me. And I used it, the memory, put it into my character, played it right to the camera—and I nailed it. I nailed it. (Beat) When I saw the rough cut, though. My face wasn't even part of the scene. (Pause) I thought about this house a lot. This house. You.

DOROTHY: Why didn't you just come home then?

MAT: I couldn't.

DOROTHY: You didn't want to.

Act One

MAT: I couldn't, not until now.

Fish DOROTHY: What do you mean, "couldn't"? I don't understand you, Mat.

Head (Pause.)

MAT: My work, Mama? In the industry? It's not easy, okay?

Soup DOROTHY: Well, nothing is easy, I've told you that, Mat. You can't be afraid to work . . .

MAT: No, no, this has nothing to do with that, please . . . I want to ask you something. (MAT guides her to a seat.)

DOROTHY: You okay? You all right, Mat? You in trouble?

MAT: No, no, nothing like that. (Pause. Seated.) I got this thing I want to do. (Beat) I want to make a movie. A small independent feature, nothing too extravagant. And it can be good, good, Mama.

DOROTHY: But you already made one.

MAT: Yeah, but not my own. See, see everybody uses you, makes you do things you don't want to . . .

DOROTHY: No one can make you do something if you don't . . .

MAT: I WANT TO MAKE . . . (Beat. Tries to calm down.) I want to make my own movie. Okay? About people like you and me. Japanese Americans. I want people to see us. Know who we really are. And you can't wait for someone else to do it for you because they don't know how—they twist it up, make it something they want to see, make it a lie . . .

DOROTHY: Nobody's lying, why would they lie . . .

MAT: Mama? Mama? Like home movies, like our own home movies of this family. Everybody else, they look at the screen, it can be their family. What about us? Dad's Papa? Your Mama? Up there, our own home movies. (Beat) I need some money.

DOROTHY (cautious): All right. How much?

MAT: A hundred thousand dollars.

DOROTHY: What?

Act One

MAT: I know it's a lot, but it's only a loan.

DOROTHY: You want how much—a hundred thousand dollars? *Fish*

(We hear VICTOR hammering, coming from deep in the house. MAT pulls out loan papers.) *Head*

MAT: A mortgage, you take a second mortgage, you'll get it back, I promise. And the timing is right for something like . . . (Continues.) *Soup*

DOROTHY (overlapping): What, a mortgage—what are you . . .

MAT: . . . this, Japan is emerging—and I can play the lead, ME, I'd be perfect for it. I've been to the bank already and talked to them. All we (pulls out papers) need to do is shoot ten minutes of the film, then we show it to PBS and our Japanese investors and they'll put up . . . (Continues.)

DOROTHY (overlapping): What? What's this? . . . (Calling) Victor! Victor, stop it! I can't sign this, Mat. I can't . . . (Continues.)

MAT: . . . the rest of the money and I can pay you right back. I just need you to sign the papers and we'll . . .

DOROTHY: . . . sign this, PAPA'S GOT TO SIGN IT! (Silence.)

MAT: Yeah, but Papa . . . He can't sign . . .

DOROTHY: I'm not going to sign something like this, I can't. What's gotten into you, Mat? Look at you, look at the way you're . . . What's gotten into you?

(DOROTHY exits. MAT turns to look at PAPA. Dim to darkness.)

(VICTOR lit. Wearing dark suit, on limo phone.)

VICTOR: No, no, this group didn't want to—Jesse, I'm not going to force them if they don't want to go. I mean, not all Japanese men wanna look at naked white women, okay? I'll pick them up later at the golf course. What? Yes, yes, I like my job, Jesse. I like it a lot. I'm sorry, okay? It's my fault, all right? "We all have to make a living," yes, I

Act One

▲
 Fish know—What? The college girls? Yeah, they were very
 Head nice, I took them all over—they just wanted to go shop-
 Soup ping so I—I know I don't speak Japanese, but they spoke
 English so—I mean, we laughed about it—I try to speak
 and it comes out all mixed up, I look Japanese but I act
 kinda funny—what? They thought I was—what?
 Retarded? (*Dim to darkness on VICTOR.*)

(*Lights up on the house. Early evening. MAT puts a pen into PAPA's hand, carefully closing his fingers around it. Notices the loan papers need a backing, looks around. Sees his picture sitting on the obutsudan [Buddhist shrine] and grabs it, placing the papers on top of his photo. Sets them in PAPA's lap. MAT taps the papers to get PAPA's attention. PAPA looks down, stares for a beat. Then drops his pen hand and looks at MAT with a blank expression. MAT in frustration yanks the loan papers off his photograph. PAPA looks down at the photo of MAT and begins to move his hands up and down as if snagging. MAT notices. Gets an idea. Takes the photo, puts it in front of his own face and moves to the center of the room. PAPA leans forward following the photo, continuing to snag. MAT pulls the photo away, revealing his face. PAPA stares. Then starts slowly to snag again. VICTOR enters and sees him. Stands by the entrance to see what MAT's going to do. MAT starts to get down on his hands and knees.*)

VICTOR (*entering*): What are you going to do?
 (*MAT realizes VICTOR's there.*)

MAT: I just want to try something.

VICTOR: Where's Mama?

MAT: She's in the back.

(*VICTOR moves to protect PAPA.*)

MAT: Just let me try something, okay, Victor? All right? I just want to try one thing.

(*Pause. VICTOR moves back. MAT slowly begins to crawl towards PAPA.*)

Act One

▲
 Fish MAT: Papa? Papa? You caught me. Look, it's Mat, your son.
 Head You caught me, reel me . . . (*Continues.*)
 Soup (*MAT on knees in front of PAPA wiggling like a hooked fish.*)

PAPA (*overlapping, upset*): No, no, Mat's not my son, Mat's NOT my son. Victor's my son, Victor's my son . . .

MAT: . . . in! Reel me in, Papa! You hooked me good, drag me in kicking and . . .

VICTOR (*overlapping, pushing MAT away*): Get away from him! Get the hell away from him! (*VICTOR goes to comfort the upset PAPA.*)

MAT: I just want to try something, Jesus, what's the problem, huh?

PAPA (*clinging*): Victor, Victor . . . (*Continues.*)

VICTOR (*overlapping*): You're getting him upset. It's okay, Papa. It's okay.

MAT (*overlapping*): So he gets upset, so what? He's crazy now, Victor. Why not try anything, huh? Maybe he needs to get upset, shook up?

PAPA: . . . Victor, Victor, Victor . . .

(*MAT shoves his face right in front of PAPA's.*)

MAT: AHHH!

PAPA: AHHH! Mama?! Mama?! I want . . . (*Continues.*)

VICTOR (*shoving him away*): Mat! Get the hell away!

MAT: Why not shock him? Why not . . . (*Continues.*)

PAPA: . . . Mama home! I want Mama home! Mama! Mama . . .

VICTOR (*overlapping*): Shhh, shhh, it's okay, Papa, it's okay, I'm here, Victor's here.

MAT: . . . shock therapy? What do we got to lose, Victor? Why the hell not try anything? Huh? Anything?

(*Silence. MAT watches VICTOR embracing PAPA and rocking him in his arms.*)

MAT: You like him like this.

(*VICTOR stares at MAT.*)

Act One

▲

MAT: No, no, you do.

Fish VICTOR: You're nuts.

MAT: Christ, you like him just this way, don't you?

Head VICTOR: Just stay away from him, okay? You stay away from him.

Soup (MAT starts to move between VICTOR and PAPA.)

MAT: Victor and Papa, hiding out at home. You're both happy as clams, huh? Don't have to go anywhere, don't have to see anybody.

(VICTOR tries to get back next to PAPA but MAT won't let him.)

VICTOR: I don't like him like this.

(MAT begins to shove VICTOR with his chest each time VICTOR tries to get to PAPA. The shove quickly develops into a form of chest butting. This goes on while they continue to talk. VICTOR holds his own all through the following and even challenges MAT, though it is clear MAT has the psychological edge.)

MAT: Yes you do, admit it.

VICTOR: No, I don't, Mat, no, no, I don't.

MAT: Yes you do.

VICTOR: I don't.

MAT: You do . . .

(They are now fully into butting chests. They stop after each encounter, pulling back to opposing positions. Stare at each other for a beat, then charge. Arms pulled back, bumping each other more and more violently until they are jumping into the air and ramming into each other's bodies.)

DOROTHY (off): Mat? Victor? What's going on? I don't want you kids breaking anything out there. Victor, you're the older one, you make sure Mat doesn't get into trouble. And Mat, don't you hurt your older brother. You hear me? Mat? Victor?

(VICTOR, who has been getting the worst of this, suddenly explodes and knocks MAT down, using what is

Act One

▲

obviously a trained combat maneuver. DOROTHY enters just at this moment.)

Fish VICTOR: You fucking asshole! You goddamn fucking asshole! DIE, YOU FUCKING GOOK!

Head (VICTOR has MAT in a stranglehold. DOROTHY looks on in horror. Blackout.)

Soup (PAPA lit.)

PAPA: Fish? Hah! When my own papa and I fished we'd chum with everything—throw in old rotten potatoes, fish guts, corn, old hamburger—hell, they'd have to come around. But sometimes they just wouldn't bite. Nothing would work. Then my old man would start to sing this song. He had a big voice, it could fill up a room. But this song was quiet, very old. And when he sang it, it was like someone else was singing. And it came from someplace so deep inside of him I was scared I would fall in and get lost. (Starts to sing. Then stops abruptly. Upset.) That's my land! That's my land! Get off my land! Get off my— (Abruptly stops. Transition into talking.) He used to say if you sing good enough, then all the fish would come out of hiding. Yeah, come right out. And then you catch 'em, take 'em home, and eat the damn suckers! (PAPA laughs loudly. Dim to darkness.)

(Lights up on the house. MAT and VICTOR jerk away from each other and go sprawling onto the ground.

Silence. MAT rubs his neck, VICTOR sits in a daze. PAPA sits in his chair. DOROTHY moves between them.)

MAT (catching breath): It's okay, it's okay, Mom.

DOROTHY: Victor?

MAT: Mom, it's okay, I can handle him.

DOROTHY: Victor? You all right?

MAT: Mom, I can . . .

DOROTHY: Shut up, Mat. Victor?

VICTOR: Go, Mama, get out. Just get outta here. Go.

(Silence. DOROTHY stares at them, then exits.)

Act One

▲

Fish MAT: Victor? Victor? Just a little roughhousing. Brothers having a little fun. We just got a little carried away, that's all. But it's all right, it's all right, Victor. I know, I know.

Head You don't have to be a gook. You don't have to think of yourself like Papa does. You don't have to be like him. You don't.

Soup *(Beat)* I was in Japan. Japan. And I had an incredible experience there. You wouldn't believe what . . .

VICTOR: "Hakujin manko shitai?" Do you like white pussy?

MAT: What?

VICTOR: You don't know anything.

MAT: It's an incredible country, Victor. Okay, okay, I was only there five days, but . . .

VICTOR *(overlapping, muttering)*: Five days, five days . . .

MAT *(continuing)*: . . . everyone, everyone—get this—looks like us. Yeah, just like us. It's wild. Black hair and everything, just like you and . . .

VICTOR: They're assholes. They're ass—

MAT: What do you mean, assholes? We got the same blood. The same blood. Our father's father's father was the same father. Some guy like Mifune, wielding . . . *(Continues.)*

VICTOR *(overlapping)*: He was a poor starving farmer clawing at the ground.

MAT: . . . his sword around, "Hah! Hah!" Our mother's mother's mother was the . . . *(Continues.)*

VICTOR *(overlapping)*: Eating insects and roots because the land was dried up and dead.

MAT: . . . the same mother. Reaching across—kimono gently flapping in the breeze. We're family. Don't you see, Victor? We're all the same . . .

VICTOR: Family? Family? What about this family? THIS family. Not those goddamn Japanese. They don't care about you, Mat. You're just a retarded JA gook to them. And I am not a gook. I am not a . . . *(Blackout.)*
(Viet Cong soldier lit. Raised gun, about to shoot)

Act One

▲

VICTOR. VICTOR, *in pool of light, stares wide-eyed with terror. Blackout.*
(Lights up full on VICTOR, MAT, and house.)

VICTOR *(mumbling rapidly to himself a Buddhist prayer)*: Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu . . .

MAT: Victor? Victor? *(No response)* Victor.
(VICTOR stops and turns to MAT.)

MAT: Picture this, picture this. When I get off the plane in Tokyo, I'm hit by a sea of faces. These faces. Everywhere I look. The cab driver yelling at me, the bar hostess trying to pick me up, the cop telling me to move along—listen to me, listen to me—in the newspapers, on magazine covers, up on the billboards . . . yellow skin, flat noses, tight eyes, everywhere, everywhere I fucking look! Victor, Victor, I can't take it, I nearly pass out. I stumble into the hotel, stagger to my room, close the curtains, turn out the lights. My mind is swimming, I need to unwind. I flick on the TV. I can't believe it. A baseball game and Dwight Gooden is Japanese! I run to the bathroom and throw water on my face. I look into the mirror. The face, the face staring back at me. Who is this guy? The nose, the nose . . . It's not pointy and huge, but it has a subtle turn and a size that is just right. And the black hair. It seems strong, the deep richness so potent—a lighter color would seem washed out. And the eyes, the single fold. How clever, how perfect. A double eyelid seems overdone, gauche—less is more.
(VICTOR touches his own face.)

Who is this good-looking guy staring back at me? He could be a movie star. *(Beat)* We could be movie stars, Victor. You and me, we can be movie stars, not gooks, movie stars.
(VICTOR stares at MAT. As lights face to black, MAT is isolated in a light.)

[END OF ACT ONE]

Act Two

Saturday night.

VICTOR *lit in pool of light. Sits bolt upright in bed with a Viet Cong soldier pointing a gun in his face. Blackout.*

VICTOR *lit in pool of light. Sits bolt upright in bed with MAT standing over him, shaking him by the collar.*

MAT: Victor, Victor, I got it—I couldn't sleep so I been drinking coffee, you know, drinking, thinking about stuff and I got it. Carp blood. Yeah, carp blood. *(Continues.)*

(VICTOR tries to orient himself.)

I was talking to this Japanese guy in a bar—he's a priest or something of one of those new religions—he said the blood of Japanese carp, you know, koi, the real old ones, has special chemical properties. Special chemical properties that heal certain types of mental illness. Papa? Papa's problem? Maybe we can help him. I mean, I didn't believe him, "Nah, come on." He said, "Hey, then how come these damn fish live to be a hundred years old?" Huh, Victor, huh?

(VICTOR starts to pay attention.)

MAT: Victor? Remember that old koi in the fishpond at the Buddhist Church? You used to be able to make him come to you like a pet dog—what was its name, what the hell was its . . . Moe! Yeah, Moe, that was it, 'cause its head looked like Moe's hair cut. It's an old Japanese koi, Victor. Brought from Japan. And its blood, maybe it can heal Papa.

(MAT stares at VICTOR. Dim to darkness.)

Act Two

PAPA *lit, picking up earth and feeling it, inhaling its rich smell.*

PAPA: They said nothing would grow here. But my papa? Jinzo Iwasaki, fresh off the boat? He had dreams so big and a heart so full, not even the hakuji* landowners could turn him away. "Here's a few worthless acres, go 'head and farm it," they laughed. Papa took some seed, put it into his clenched brown fist and drove it into the soil. The black peat dirt swirled up around his head like a swarm of friendly butterflies. "This is good, this is good growing soil," he thought to himself. He raised his fist and drove it in again. Up sprang tomatoes! Asparagus! And potatoes, bigger and tastier than anyone had ever seen! Acres and acres of potatoes as far as the eye could . . .

(DOROTHY lit upstage from him.)

DOROTHY: Papa, Mrs. Davidson called. She said you didn't show up. You keep doing that you're going to lose another house. We can't afford that . . . *(Notices PAPA trying to hide his hands full of soil)* You went out to the farm again, didn't you? They're going to have you arrested if you go out there, they warned you . . .

PAPA: From over there, to over there, that's all Grandpa's . . .

DOROTHY: Papa, Papa, please! *(Beat)* I know you tried. But there were only a few acres left after the war, what could you do with them? And with your father, the way he was . . .

PAPA: It's my land, it's my land, Mama.

DOROTHY: It's not your land, Papa. *(Beat)* You're a gardener now. A gardener.

(DOROTHY turns and exits. PAPA senses that there is something diseased about the soil. Drops it and tries frantically to wipe it off his hands. PAPA dims to darkness.)

*Caucasian.

Act Two

▲
 Fish
 Head
 Soup
 “*Like A Rolling Stone*” brought up loud over the house speakers. Lights up on MAT and VICTOR cruising along in MAT’s convertible. Night. Both wearing dark sunglasses, heavy coats. Wind blowing in their faces. MAT’s laughing, singing along with the radio, having a grand time. VICTOR is trying to have a good time, mumbling the words and moving awkwardly to the rhythm.

MAT: You feel good? You feel good? I feel good, real good. Victor? You feel good? You feel gooooo!! . . . (MAT turns hard into a turn at high speed, wheels screeching. Then back onto a straightaway.) Ha-hah! You feel good, you feel good?

VICTOR (cautiously): Yeah, yeah, I do.

MAT: Ah, I feel great. I feel really . . . GREAAAT!! . . . (Turns hard into another turn. Then back onto a straightaway.) Ahhh! . . . Like old times, huh? Just like old times . . .

(MAT takes his hands off the wheel and slaps VICTOR affectionately on the back. VICTOR notices and grabs the wheel.)

MAT (laughing, taking the wheel back): Ah man, I feel great . . .

(MAT brings the car to a screeching halt. Turns radio off. They admire the night vista.)

MAT (taking off his dark glasses): Whew! Would you look at that. Huh? Look at that. City lights!

VICTOR: Not too much tule fog, huh.

(MAT notices VICTOR still has his dark glasses on, leans over and taps them gently. VICTOR sheepishly takes them off. MAT lights up a cigarette.)

MAT (laughing): ‘Member that time Mom and Dad took us to the drive-in to see that movie *The Mole People*? ‘Member, ‘member, *The Mole People*? And how we were so scared we couldn’t sleep, so I crawled into your bed?

VICTOR: That was scary. They were all bumpy looking.

Act Two

▲
 Fish
 Head
 Soup
 MAT: We went to sleep holding onto each other for dear life. The next morning when Mom found us we were still holding each other.

VICTOR: Yeah.

(They share a quiet laugh.)

MAT: You want a smoke?

VICTOR (shaking head): Un-uh.

(Pause.)

MAT: You weren’t really scared, were you?

(VICTOR doesn’t follow.)

MAT: You weren’t scared. Of the mole people.

VICTOR: Yeah, I was.

MAT: Nah, nah—you just pretended to be so I wouldn’t feel bad. You let me crawl into bed with you. Hold onto you. (Beat) Hell, I was scared shitless—those mole people, whoa, get outta here—they looked ugly, man, ugly!

(They laugh. Calm down, stare out at the vista, enjoying the moment.)

VICTOR: Mat? Do you sometimes . . . Do you sometimes kinda not know where you . . . (VICTOR is silent.)

MAT: Victor?

(Slight pause.)

VICTOR: When I was in ‘Nam? You know when I was hit by some Viet Cong mortar fire? They wouldn’t pick me up, the medics. I was lying there, bleeding all over, they were picking everyone else up. I kept screaming, “I’m an American, I’m a Japanese American, I’m not VC.” But they wouldn’t pick me up. They walked right past me. They thought I was . . .

(A carload of youths drives by.)

YOUTHS (voices all overlapping):

(Youth 1) Hey Japs, it’s some Jap boys. Don’t you know it’s freezing, dumbshits!? It’s NIPPY! It’s NIPPY!!

(Youth 2) Fuckin’ Vietnamese, we should’ve killed you all over there. Gooks! Gooks! Gooks!

Act Two

▲
 Fish (Youth 3) We don't want your fucking slant-eyed money! This is America not JAPLAND—go buy Mexico!
 Head MAT (out of control): FUCK YOU! GET OUTTA THAT CAR AND I'LL BREAK YOUR FUCKIN' FACE.
 Soup YEAH YOU, FUCK YOU! COME ON— (MAT notices VICTOR is silent.) Victor, come on, tell 'em “Fuck you!” Go on, say it! Say it, Victor, say it!

(VICTOR can't. The youths drive away, shouting.)
 MAT: FUCK YOU! (MAT is shaking. Trying to calm down.) Victor, what the hell's wrong with you? Huh? What the hell's wrong with you? You don't have to be scared of those punks. You can speak up, you don't have to be silent. I was in Japan. Hey, we're a part of a voice the whole world is listening to. If they give you a bad time, just say, “Fuck you.”

(VICTOR remains silent and rigid. MAT eases off.)
 MAT: Victor? Victor, you okay? Victor?
 (VICTOR is silent. MAT feels bad.)
 MAT: I'm sorry I yelled at you, okay? I shouldn't have yelled at you. You're all right. Don't worry, you're all right. Victor? Victor?

(Pause.)
 VICTOR (quietly): I'm glad you're back. Mat? I'm glad.
 MAT: Like old times, huh. The Iwasaki Brothers.
 (VICTOR nods.)
 MAT: I'm going to make everything right, too. For you, Mama and Papa—the whole family. Okay? And I'm not going to leave you behind. I'm not going to forget you. You don't have to be afraid. (Starting up engine. Putting sunglasses on VICTOR and himself.) Hey, I was a little worried about coming back. Well, because of the way I left and everything. But you know, maybe me dying was the best thing. I mean it, really, maybe it was the best thing for the family. Yeah, the best thing.

(VICTOR's mood changes, upset. Takes off sunglasses.)

Act Two

▲
 MAT: Besides, we're movie stars now, Victor. Movie stars . . . (MAT turns up the radio and revs up the engine. The Doors' “Break on Through” comes on. MAT shouts over the sound.) And stars do only one thing . . . (Pulls out flashlight and shines it on themselves) Shine! Shine! Shine! (Dim to darkness on MAT and VICTOR. “Break on Through” transitions into sutra chanting.)

Fish
 Head
 Soup

(Night. The Buddhist Church koi pond. We hear Buddhist sutra chanting. MAT enters, flashing his light around. VICTOR follows, silent and preoccupied. He holds a bag of potato chips.)

MAT: There must be some kind of service going on. What is it, a funeral or something? God, this is weird, this is really weird. I haven't been back here in years. I think the last time was Uncle Gordon's omairi service or whatever you call that three-year thing after someone dies—Hey, remember Obon, all the dancing and fat cousin Brenda in her kimono trying to do those Japanese moves? She looked like fuckin' Godzilla out there. (Noticing) All right, here we go, here we go—yeah, the pond. Old Moe's here, he's here—I can feel it . . . (Hears something, grabs VICTOR and pulls him into the shadows) Shhh! (Checking, decides it's clear. VICTOR jerks his arm away from MAT's clutch.) We're all right as long as we don't make too much noise. Okay, go ahead.

(MAT pushes VICTOR forward.) Go ahead and call him. Go on, call him.

(VICTOR is silent.)

MAT: Call him, Victor. Call him—you know, with the song, the song.

VICTOR: What song?

MAT: Jesus fucking Christ—the song, remember the song Papa used to say would make the fish come out. You used



Fish

to sing it. Moe would come tearing out from under the lilies, tongue hanging out—and he'd come right up to you and you'd pet him. Yeah, you'd goddamn pet him.

Head

(VICTOR is silent.)

Soup

MAT (angry): Give me the carp food. Come on, come on, give me the potato chips. Give me the goddamn potato chips! (Grabs them from VICTOR. Starts angrily to toss the chips into the pond.) Moe! Moe! Get your butt over here. It's Larry and Curley! (Frustrated, crumples the bag) I know he's out there, Victor. He's out there. You gonna do it or what? Huh? You gonna do it?

(VICTOR is silent.)

MAT: Okay, okay, be that way—I'll do it myself. You just stand there like an asshole, I'll do it. Get some rocks and bombard him (exiting while speaking) in the deep end, scare the shit out of him and he'll jump right out of the water!

(MAT exits. The sutra chanting continues in background.

VICTOR stands for a moment staring out into the darkness. Then, slowly begins to sing the song. Softly, barely audible, then growing in volume. It seems to weave in and out of the sutra chanting. VICTOR spots Moe. Bends down, carefully reaches out, and begins to pet the fish. Continues to sing, his voice intoning a song that melds with the sutra chanting. MAT appears and stops when he sees VICTOR. Starts to approach but VICTOR motions him to stay back.)

MAT (whispering): Grab him! Grab him!

VICTOR: Why?

MAT: Why? So we can make Papa well, dummy.

VICTOR: Why do you want to do that?

MAT: Why, why?—grab the thing before it gets . . .

VICTOR (threateningly): I'll scare it away.

MAT: Jesus, don't, don't—for the family, for the family—okay? okay?—grab it now.

VICTOR: You don't care about the family. When . . .
(Continues.)



Fish

MAT (overlapping): Victor, I'm the one, I'm the one who can make us all proud of the Iwasaki name . . .

VICTOR: . . . did you ever care about this family? Huh?

Head

MAT: I need the money, okay, I need the money! (Pause) I need the money to make a movie. If we're going to be movie stars, you gotta make a movie, right? That thing that happened to me in Tokyo? That's the story—a Sansei discovers his roots. I need Papa to get well so he can sign these papers. (Pulling them out) I talked to Mom about it, it's all okay, now grab the fish, Victor, grab . . .

Soup

VICTOR: Stay back! You talked to Mama? Wait, what are those?

MAT: Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, to the house—it's only a loan, a temporary thing.

VICTOR: The house?

MAT: Yeah, yeah—a loan on a second mortgage, everybody does it all the time. It's no big deal—once this movie breaks . . .

VICTOR (splashing the water, scaring the fish away): AHH!
(Sutra chanting stops. Silence.)

MAT (incredulous): Why? Why'd you do that, Victor? (No response) Victor, why'd you do it? Huh? Why the hell . . .

VICTOR: They dragged that river for one week. One whole week before they gave up. They wanted to quit but Papa wouldn't let them. He kept hollering and screaming . . .
(Continues.)

MAT (overlapping): Victor, what the hell you talking about? Victor? Victor?

VICTOR: . . . that he wasn't going to let the river take his son. "I want him back, I want my son back." I think all the skin-divers and people with equipment felt sorry for him so they kept on. Mama and I thought it was no use but we were too scared to say anything . . . (Continues.)

MAT (overlapping): Victor, I don't want to hear this. I don't want to hear this right now. Victor? Victor? Not now . . .

Act Two

Fish

VICTOR: . . . By the end he had no voice. Just a raspy wheeze that came out of his mouth. Finally we got him home but he wouldn't sleep. He just sat by the window holding your fishing pole.

Head

(Sutra chanting begins again.)

Soup

VICTOR: I got up during the night to check on him. He was gone. I figured he went back to the river, so I went down there. It was so foggy but I could see him. He was . . . *(Continues.)*

(PAPA lit, standing on his overstuffed chair. Mimes casting out, begins snagging. VICTOR and MAT turn and watch as VICTOR describes the action.)

VICTOR: . . . out on the boat. His Coleman lamp was burning so it cast this strange glow around him, like watching him in his own dream. And as I watched him I could see he had his line in and was snagging. He would reel a bit, then snag. Reel a bit, then snag. And then it dawned on me. He was trying to catch you. I just watched. All night. I just stood and watched him. Standing there with this vacant look in his eyes, snagging away.

(PAPA dims to darkness. Sound cue ends.)

VICTOR: And that's the way he's been, Mat, ever since then. Ever since you killed yourself. So don't you come back here and tell me how you care about this family. How you . . .

MAT *(overlapping)*: No, no, you can't blame me, he was heading that way all along . . .

VICTOR *(continues)*: . . . want to make Papa well. You don't care about this . . .

(PAPA lit in chair.)

PAPA: MAT, VICTOR, WAIT!

(MAT and VICTOR turn toward PAPA.)

PAPA: I see you playing with the kids in the new neighborhood. It's all right to do things together. Have hakujin friends. But if anything ever happens, they'll turn on you. You can't trust white people. *(Beat)* Now, go play.

Act Two

▲

(MAT and VICTOR look at each other. As they dim to darkness, PAPA goes to half-light. DOROTHY lit. PAPA watches. DOROTHY removes her robe to reveal a nightgown.)

Fish

Head

DOROTHY: It's hard to explain. I guess when I'm with you I feel . . . I feel things are right. *(Listening)* Well, yeah, "right"—I said it's hard to explain . . . *(Pause. Uncomfortable.)* When I was in camp, relocation camp? You don't mind if I talk about this, do you? I mean, you asked so . . . *(Pause. Difficult.)* I was only a young girl—nine, ten years old. And I remember thinking, "We must have done something wrong." Everyone kept saying, "How come we're in here, we didn't do anything." But at night, as I lay in bed, I kept thinking, "We must have done something. Something bad. I mean, why else would they punish us like this?" I know that's stupid, I was only a kid . . . *(Shrugs, embarrassed)* When I'm with you I feel . . . I feel things are the way they're supposed to be. Right. Safe. I feel special.

Soup

(DOROTHY dims to darkness. Then, PAPA follows.)

MAT lit on phone, holding a gift-wrapped box. Later that same night at the Iwasaki house.

MAT: What? The Japanese have pulled out? But you said . . . Yeah, I know these things change quickly but . . . We still have PBS, right? We still have them, they're still interested in the idea? Good, good . . . Don't worry, please, okay, please, I'm working on 'em, I'm working on 'em. Okay, I'll call you later, bye.

(Hangs up. DOROTHY enters from the back. Dressed in robe.)

DOROTHY: Where's Victor?

(MAT's startled.)

MAT: Don't scare me like that, okay? *(Composing himself)* Sorry about, you know, earlier. We didn't break anything, did we?

Act Two

▲

Fish DOROTHY: Un-uh. I heard the car drive off. I came out to check and you were both gone. Where'd you go at this hour?

Head MAT: We had to work some things out. Victor and me. (*Noticing DOROTHY's hair and earrings*) You go out again?

Soup DOROTHY: I couldn't sleep. I ran some errands. Where is he? Is he okay?

MAT: He's fine, Mama.

DOROTHY: Where is he, then? I don't want you getting him into any trouble. The way he is and everything.

MAT: I'm not going to get him into any trouble. He's just walking back.

DOROTHY: Why's he walking back?

MAT: He wanted some fresh air, okay? Trust me, he's fine—he doesn't need my help and I don't need his. (*Awkward pause. MAT remembers the box and offers it to DOROTHY.*) It's for you. I forgot about it in all the excitement, coming home and everything.

(*DOROTHY doesn't move.*)

MAT: Go on, take it. It's for you, Mama. I got it for you special.

(*DOROTHY reluctantly takes it.*)

MAT: It's from L.A. I bought it down there, Rodeo Drive. The latest. A Hanae Mori. I thought it would look good on you.

(*DOROTHY still hasn't moved to open it.*)

MAT: Please? Mama? Please open it.

(*DOROTHY finally gives in and opens it.*)

MAT (*gesturing towards it*): The color and everything, I thought, you know . . .

(*Silence. DOROTHY fingers the fabric.*)

MAT: You like it?

(*DOROTHY is lost in her thoughts.*)

MAT: Mama?

DOROTHY: Yes, I do, yes.

MAT: You like it then? Huh? You like it, Mama?

Act Two

▲

DOROTHY (*moved*): Yes, I like it. I like it very much, Mat.

(*Pause.*)

MAT: Try it on.

DOROTHY: Now?

MAT: Yeah, yeah, try it on. I want to see how it looks on you.

DOROTHY: I don't know . . .

MAT: Come on, come on. If you look good enough, you can be my date.

DOROTHY: For what?

MAT: The Academy Awards.

(*They both laugh. DOROTHY decides to try it on. As she goes to the hallway, she stops.*)

DOROTHY: Mat?

MAT: Yeah?

DOROTHY: I've been thinking about the money? You know the loan? For the movie? I've got another idea.

MAT: Great, great, ah great, Mama. I knew you'd come through for me.

(*DOROTHY turns and exits.*)

DOROTHY (*off*): The house thing can't work, okay? But, maybe we can talk to this friend of mine. Maybe he can advise you. He's very good at these things.

(*MAT stares for a long moment in DOROTHY's direction. Then begins to wander slowly around the house looking, touching things.*)

DOROTHY (*off*): How'd you know my size?

MAT: Still the same?

DOROTHY (*off*): Yes. You remembered.

(*MAT continues to feel the textures of things, to inhale their smells.*)

DOROTHY (*off*): You know the movie? Mat?

(*MAT hears but doesn't respond.*)

DOROTHY: Mat?

MAT: Yes?

DOROTHY (*off*): Your movie? Maybe you shouldn't do it just

Act Two

Fish

about Japanese Americans. I mean, we were talking about this, my friend and I—who's interested in that kind of thing? You should do a regular story. A more normal one.

Head

Then people will want to go see it. Not just about Japanese Americans, who's going to want to go see it, anyway. At least . . .

Soup

(Entering) One white character, huh? You could be his assistant or his best friend or something . . . *(DOROTHY is quite stunning.)* What do you think?

(Pause.)

MAT: Nice, very nice.

(DOROTHY is feeling good. A small turn.)

MAT: The dress you had on last night? When you came in?

DOROTHY: Un-huh?

(MAT shakes head disapprovingly.)

MAT: You should never shop at the local mall here.

(DOROTHY moves to MAT.)

DOROTHY: Let's dance.

MAT: What?

DOROTHY: Like we used to. I want to dance.

(Pause. MAT hesitates but is taken in by DOROTHY's playfulness. She moves into his arms, and they dance for a moment in silence.)

DOROTHY: Remember Victor? He just couldn't ask a girl to dance. He'd try and try . . .

MAT: Yeah, I remember.

DOROTHY: He wasn't like you, you were so popular with the hakujin girls. Calling all hours of the day and night. I had to call their parents, Papa wouldn't. Imagine, Caucasian girls chasing my boy. *(Dancing, DOROTHY stares at MAT's face.)*

MAT: What are you looking at?

DOROTHY: I just can't believe you're back. I'm sorry.

MAT: No, that's okay.

(DOROTHY adjusts his collar, straightens his hair.)

Act Two

DOROTHY: We have to get you to shave, clean up . . . *(Starting, touching)* Your face—everything about it . . .

MAT: My face is your face.

DOROTHY *(laughing)*: Yes. *(DOROTHY whirls MAT around.)*

MAT: Whoa! That was an interesting move.

(DOROTHY laughs.)

MAT: Did he teach you that?

DOROTHY: What?

MAT: Did he teach you that move? When you were out dancing together?

(DOROTHY stops dancing.)

DOROTHY: I don't know what you're talking about.

MAT: Who is this guy you go out dancing with till all hours of the night?

DOROTHY: I have to work late at the restaurant.

MAT: Leaving Papa at home. I mean, what if he has an accident, falls over, or . . .

DOROTHY: Victor stays home with him. He takes care . . .

MAT: Victor can't take care of himself, how the hell is he going to take care of Papa?

DOROTHY: He's working now, he does all kinds of things around the house. He's . . . *(Continues.)*

MAT *(overlapping)*: I don't see anything. What the hell has he done? I don't see anything different. The only . . .

(Continues.)

DOROTHY: . . . always hammering away all the time, ripping things out and putting things in.

MAT: . . . thing I see is you running around like some goddamn seventeen year old in heat!

(Silence.)

DOROTHY: What was I supposed to do after you left, Mat? After you died? Talk to Victor? He just wants to bang away at the walls all day long. Talk to Papa? Hmph . . . Mama raised me for more refined things in life than taking food orders from people who don't even know what the food is.

Act Two

▲

Fish MAT: I'm back now and you stay at home. You stay at home with Papa. I'm back and . . . *(Continues.)*

Head DOROTHY *(overlapping)*: What about Papa, Mat? What about Papa? You did that and the house isn't the same anymore. It's . . . *(Continues.)*

Soup MAT: . . . everything's going to be just like it was. Just like it was.

DOROTHY *(continuing)*: . . . never going to be the same. And I like it this way, I like it just the way it is.

MAT: Who is this guy? Is this the guy you were going to introduce me to, huh? Who's supposed to help me make my movie? Who is he, huh? Who is he?

DOROTHY: He takes me dancing, takes me to the best Japanese restaurants, we eat fugu—do you know what fugu is, do you? It's poisonous blowfish. And that dress? You said I bought at the local mall? He brought it back from Tokyo, not L.A., Tokyo where he goes all the time to visit the home office. *(Beat)* Mr. William Odell, William Odell—he distributes Japanese ice cream. He collects Japanese swords, he studies . . . *(Continues.)*

(MAT starts to rip the dress off DOROTHY.)

MAT *(overlapping)*: Mama. Mama. Mama! I want *Mama!* I WANT MAMA!

DOROTHY: . . . kendo. He looks like William Holden. William Holden and he knows more about Japanese culture than I do. HE'S MORE JAPANESE THAN YOU ARE!

(Silence. DOROTHY stands there, dress torn.)

DOROTHY: I was standing there. The air was so still. I could hear the voices of the workers calling to each other, they seemed so far away. And I was so cold. The wet fog had seeped into my bones, so cold. And I wanted to die. Not Mat. Not my son. Me. I wanted to take your place. And I kept thinking if I could only make myself smaller and smaller it would be easier to die. And all the time I had this image in my head of myself holding you in my arms, a little

Act Two

▲

baby, rocking you back and forth, back and forth . . . I didn't have much—I wait on tables—but what I did have I gave to you. Not Victor, I gave to you. Because I could see the spark in your eyes, the Akari brightness, a willingness to live, not be afraid. I remember holding your hand and walking you through this house, you were five, six years old. And as we walked I handed you things. This vase, it was my oh-i-jiisan's, my great-grandfather's. I had you hold it, feel it. This kakeji, this scroll, has been in my family for generations. And this . . . I had you touch it, smell it, so you would remember, so you would always know who you were, where you came from. It wasn't much, but it was all I had to give and I offered it to you. To you. And what did you do? You threw it away. You killed yourself. You gave me a terrible gift, but I accepted it. I lived. I survived, to carry on the Akari name so these can be remembered, cherished. You can't stop me from feeling this. You can't make me die now. Not now. I am alive. *(Dim to darkness on DOROTHY and MAT.)*

We hear VICTOR's voice softly singing. Sutra chanting gradually brought up.

VICTOR *lit at pond, petting Moe.*

VICTOR: We're being overrun. I'm hit. Lying against a dirt ravine. And this young VC is coming towards me. He's all out of control, shooting everything—Bam! Bam! Bam! Wounded GIs, dead bodies—Bam! Bam! Bam! He's totally jacked up. I see him coming towards me and I can't move, my leg . . . Bam! Bam! He hits Jackson, blows half his body away. He looks at me. Our eyes lock. He raises his gun. He's terrified. He's looking at me. His gun is aimed right at my face. He's going to shoot, he's going to blow my fucking head off . . . *(Beat)* He lowers his gun, still looking at me, staring at me, at my face. My face. He runs off. He

Act Two

▲

didn't shoot me. He didn't kill me . . . *(Pause)* I am not the
Fish enemy. I am not the . . . *(Continues.)*
(VICTOR begins to beat himself more and more violently
Head with his fists.)
VICTOR *(continuing)*: . . . enemy. I am not the enemy . . .
Soup *Lights up on the Iwasaki house. MAT and VICTOR.*

VICTOR *(mumbling)*: Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida
Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu . . .
MAT: How long has this thing with Mom been going on?
(VICTOR continues to mumble to himself.)
MAT: Victor!
(VICTOR stops, noticing MAT.)
VICTOR: It makes me feel good.
MAT: What?
VICTOR: "Namu Amida Batsu," that thing we used to say in
church. I don't even know what it means, it just makes me
feel . . .
MAT: Victor. How long has this thing with Mama been going
on?
(Pause.)
VICTOR: What thing?
MAT: AAHH! *(Beat)* It's 3:00 in the morning and she went
out again. She just ups and goes out. Where do you think
she goes, Victor?
VICTOR: Ice cream?
MAT: Victor, Victor, Victor—what the hell's wrong with
you? I mean, first you don't want to help Papa and now you
pretend like you don't know Mom's stepping out on him.
Mom and Papa used to have a good thing. We used to all
sit down to dinner. We used to talk about this and that. It
used to be good. What happened to this family, Victor? I
leave and the whole goddamn thing falls apart.
VICTOR: I don't like you anymore.

Act Two

▲

MAT: What?
VICTOR: I said, "I don't like you anymore."
MAT: Ah, Jesus, not now, Victor, not now. I don't want to
hear this, I don't have time for . . . *Head*
VICTOR: Fuck you.
MAT *(moving towards the bedroom)*: Great, great, you don't
like me, I get the picture. *Soup*
(VICTOR blocks MAT's way.)
MAT: I want to check on Papa.
(VICTOR doesn't move.)
MAT: I was making some headway. He's going to sign the
papers, I'm going to make this movie.
(VICTOR is silent.)
MAT: GET OUT OF MY WAY! *(No response)* Okay, okay,
I'm through messing around. Get out of my way.
(VICTOR pushes MAT back into the dining room table.)
MAT: I don't want to hurt you. I'm warning you.
(VICTOR begins to strangle MAT.)
MAT: Victor? Victor, you're hurting me.
(VICTOR pushes MAT down on the table continuing to
strangle the struggling MAT.)
MAT: I can't breathe, Victor. I can't breathe . . . Victor, let
go . . . Victor . . .
(Blackout.)
(Lights up on MAT and VICTOR. MAT is lying on the
table. He appears to be dead. Silence. VICTOR stares at
MAT's body.)
VICTOR: "He's all right, he's going to be all right." They're
pulling the car out of the river. "He's all right, he always
lands on his feet." They find your jacket. "He's all right, he
always gets out of trouble." They find your shoes. "He's all
right, you'll see, you'll see" . . . *(Pause)* I believed in you. I
would've done anything for you, Mat, anything. Because
you were the one. I mean, no one had to point it out to me,
make me see it. You were better in school, better in sports,

▲ Act Two

Fish better looking. You just were always the better one as long as I could remember. And as we got older? I mean everybody loved you. Not just Mom and Papa anymore, but the kids at school. I always used to think, "How does he do it? How come he's so comfortable with all those kids? I always feel intimidated around them. Like they have something over me—like everything they do is somehow the right way and I'm . . . less than them." But you? No, not Mat. Mat just struts in there one of the "in" crowd. Laughing loudly, making too much noise, drawing attention to himself. I don't want people to notice me, I want to blend in. But you, you were so good at it, sometimes I used to think, "My god, he's even out-whiting the other white kids." *(Pause)* I wanted to be just like you. I mean, you were beating them at their own game. But I couldn't be like you. I couldn't then, I can't now. *(Beat)* Stop making me feel so, so . . . Just go away. Just go away, Mat. *(Pause. VICTOR looks away from MAT's body.)*

Aaron Copland's Clarinet Concerto is gradually brought up. It evokes a mood of beautiful sadness. Lighting change. MAT, on the table, turns over onto his downstage side as if turning in his sleep. PAPA and DOROTHY enter. PAPA, appearing healthy and vigorous, playfully tousles VICTOR's hair. VICTOR in turn laughs at the teasing gesture and the two exchange a few playful boxing jabs. As a smiling DOROTHY moves to the table with the food, PAPA embraces her from behind and kisses her on the cheek. They take no notice of MAT on the table. PAPA, DOROTHY, VICTOR—all normal, happy, around the dinner table about to enjoy a meal. No utensils, everything mimed.

MAT awakens and moves away from the table. For a moment he stands and watches, unsure of what to make of the situation. The other family members notice him and motion for him to join them. As MAT sits, they hand him food and he soon finds himself drawn into the activity of this warm family gathering. PAPA stops everyone and has them all join hands in

Act Two ▲

appreciation of the moment, then return to their meal. MAT is overcome with joy. They're the perfect Japanese American family. Perfect. They pass food, smile warmly at each other, eat . . .

Then, slowly, MAT's expression changes to despair. He leans back away from the table. As he does, the other family members, who talk among themselves, go to half-light as MAT remains lit in an isolated pool. He sadly watches them. The music swells. Slow fade to black.

[END OF ACT TWO]

Fish

Head

Soup

Act Three

Sunday. DOROTHY lit. Back turned, pulling a kimono on. Talking to her friend. In a "sex" hotel. Uncomfortable, but hiding it.

DOROTHY: You want me to wear this? This is what you like? No, no, if this is what you want. I just didn't think—no, no, I like it, I like it, too. (*Adjusting the kimono*) My mother wanted me to marry him. It was always her idea. She wanted me to. "See this dish in front of you," she'd say—it was old hand-me-down stuff. "Don't believe your eyes. It's not cheap everyday ware, no, no, but an Imari plate—a high-toned, expensive Japanese plate. That's what you're really eating off of" . . . (*Interrupted by friend's suggestion. Uneasy.*) Okay . . . (*As she begins to loosen her hair, she continues.*) "Marry Togo Iwasaki's son, marry him, marry him. So they don't have as much as they used to. It's in the blood. The Iwasaki blood" . . . (*She is now very uneasy. She lets her hair loose so it falls to her shoulders.*) I'm just a little uncomfortable. Wearing this. Being in this kind of place. No, no, I don't mind, if this is what you want . . . What? The movie?

(DOROTHY picks up the remote and presses the button. We hear the sounds of a cheesy low-budget sound track.)

FEMALE VOICE (*overtly sexual*): Oooo . . . Come to Mama-san, big boy. Oooo . . .

(DOROTHY sees something on the TV screen that disturbs her. We begin to hear the sounds of love-making. She stares bewildered at the screen.)

DOROTHY: Mat? Mat? . . .

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(DOROTHY dims to darkness.)

Lights up on the house. MAT on phone holding a towel around his tender neck.

MAT: No, no, I don't want to hear this. Don't tell me this. You said PBS was interested, you said it was a done deal. "Redress"? So we're getting redress money for the camps, so what? "We're not politically hot anymore"? You're doing the *what*? The Black-Korean grocer controversy, it's more sexy? What is this, a beauty contest? Two minorities are better than one? Yeah, yeah, I'll bet you are. Well, you go 'head, go 'head and do it. I don't need you, I don't need PBS, I don't need the Japanese! (*MAT slams phone down.*)

(VICTOR enters pushing PAPA in a wheelchair. VICTOR is very distracted.)

VICTOR: Mat? Mat? . . .

(MAT ignores VICTOR and steers a clear path around him into the hallway.)

(Pause.)

MAT (*off*): Goddamnit, goddamnit!

(MAT reenters.)

MAT: The toilet doesn't work, Victor. I thought you fixed the damn thing.

VICTOR: Mat?

MAT (*feeling his neck*): Stay away, stay away from me . . .

(MAT goes to the sink to wash his hands. Turns the faucet, nothing comes out.) No water, Victor, no water. This is a water faucet—water's supposed to be coming out of it. (*MAT goes over to pour himself some cold coffee.*)

VICTOR: You know what my job is? Mat, know what it is?

MAT: You drive people around, right?

VICTOR: At the Japanese hotel—you know what my job really is?

MAT: I'm happy you're working, okay, I've told you that.

Act Three

▲

Fish VICTOR: They don't want to go see the port. They don't want to go see the Japanese American Cultural Center. You know where they want to go?

Head MAT: I don't have time for this, Victor. I don't . . .
(Continues.)

Soup VICTOR (overlapping): They all want to go to those hotels. To go . . . (Continues.)

MAT (overlapping): . . . want to hear this, I don't care about your sex life. Whatever you like is . . . (Continues.)

VICTOR: . . . into those rooms with those women. They have these TV screens and sometimes I watch. I watch . . .

MAT: . . . fine by me, guy, I don't care, I don't give a damn!
(Silence.)

VICTOR: Mat, Mat, I'm ready to help Papa. I'm ready now. I think we should make him well, make Papa all right so Mama will come home. Mama will stay at home. Mama has to stay at home. Mat? What do you say, huh? What do you say?
(Silence. MAT stares at VICTOR.)

MAT: Now? You want to help him now? Just go away, just go . . . (Continues.)

VICTOR (overlapping): Mat? Please? Mat . . .

MAT: . . . away, Victor. Just . . . fuck you. (Beat, quietly)
"Fuck you"?

(VICTOR stares at him for a moment. Then, turns and exits. MAT looks at PAPA.)

Cross-fade to river area. As lights come up, MAT wheels PAPA downstage to the river's edge.

MAT: Well, here we are. God, it's cold. You okay? That's where Grandpa's farm used to be. (Turning) And the river. (Pause, looking. Starts to laugh.) Remember how Mama had me in that harness and she'd walk me around on the end of that dog leash. You, Victor, and Mama sitting there

Act Three

▲

trying to quietly fish and I'd be pulling at the end of the leash trying to get away. She was afraid I'd wander off and fall in the water.
(MAT looks at PAPA, who stares out.)

Fish MAT: The film deal is dead, Papa. You did it to me again, you satisfied? (Beat) Talk to me. Please. I know you can hear me. I know you can. You've got to talk to me. You've got to—Stop this! Stop fucking with my head! I know you can hear me! I know you're in there, so talk! TALK!

Head PAPA: Where's Victor? Where's Victor? Where's Victor?
(MAT stares at PAPA.)

Soup PAPA: Where's Mama? Where's Mama? Mama? Mama?

MAT: She's out. She's out, Papa. She just stepped out for a bit but when we get back she'll be there. I'm sure of it.

PAPA (upset): Mama? Mama?

MAT: Papa, don't worry, she'll be right back, don't worry. It's Mat. Your son. Mat, your son.

PAPA: Mat's not my son. Mat's not my son. Victor's my son. Victor's my son. Mat's not my son.
(Silence. MAT stares at PAPA.)

MAT: Remember that time downtown? Are you listening to me? Are you listening? Remember that time downtown when that big guy came up to you? "Hey, you a Chinaman?" You mumbled something and pushed Victor and me into the backseat of the car. You had this funny look on your face all tight. "No, no, excuse me." Victor and I had our noses pressed against the window waiting for you to yell at this ugly man. To put this ugly mean man in his place. "What, you one of those people from Ja-pan? You a Jap?" He was laughing and having a good time, a crowd had gathered. You finally got in the car but the man was lying on the hood now. I kept thinking, "Why isn't Papa yelling like he does at home or when Mr. Nakamura fixes the car wrong?" But you just sat there, stiff, staring ahead.
Are you listening to me?

Act Three

Fish

All the way home, no one said anything. And I remember my face feeling all hot. Feeling ashamed. Victor and I never talked about it. And I began to hate you. Hate you because you were my daddy and every time I looked at you I saw you being humiliated, shuffling like a houseboy in front of that man. And you made me feel that same feeling.

Head

So, I hung out with whites. Yes, I made fun of other “oriental” kids, cracked jokes about them—hell, I wasn’t one of them. I mean, why would I want to be like one of those quiet shuffling cowards? Why would I want to be like my papa? Papa who sits here while Mama goes off and . . .

Soup

And so one night I left. Nah, one night I killed myself. Yes, I just killed myself off.

(Pause.)

But Papa? I’m back. And you gotta help me this time. This time, you gotta help me, you can’t leave me in the backseat. Papa? You owe *(grabbing PAPA by shirt and shaking him)* me. You owe me! YOU OWE ME!

(Silence. PAPA stares at MAT. MAT gives up and lets go of PAPA. MAT and PAPA dim to darkness.)

Koi pond. VICTOR enters with a flashlight. Stops, stares out at the pond. Agitated. Proceeds to take off his shoes and socks, to roll up his pant legs. Now he’s ready. Takes out a white towel and holds it in front of him, the ends gripped with both hands. Looks out at the water for a beat. Then, he quickly jerks both ends making a snapping sound. Blackout.

Lights up at the Iwasaki house. MAT throws his clothes into his carry bag. DOROTHY watches him.

DOROTHY: I know about the “movie.”

MAT: Yeah? It doesn’t matter anymore, Mom.

DOROTHY: I know about the “movie.”

MAT: I don’t care, though. I don’t need this family’s help. I’ll figure out a way to do it on my own. I don’t need . . .

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DOROTHY: The one you did in Japan. I know about it. Someone told me, Mat. The movie you did in Tokyo. Someone told me all about it.

(Silence. DOROTHY and MAT stare at each other.)

MAT *(going back to packing)*: Independent films can show things big-budget movies can’t show. I mean, European films show that kind of stuff . . . *(Continues.)*

DOROTHY *(overlapping)*: Stop it, all right, Mat, stop it, will you? *(Beat)* Just stop lying, stop lying to me, please . . .

MAT: . . . all the time, it’s an art film. It’s not for everybody—I mean, most people aren’t accustomed to seeing that kind of thing but in the independent film industry it goes on all the . . .

DOROTHY *(slapping MAT hard)*: STOP IT! *(Silence)* How could you? Mat? How could you?

MAT: Mama, you don’t know. You don’t . . . *(Picking up the vase)* The “Akari brightness” . . . *(Can’t finish line)* I get to Hollywood—ah man, I’m finally free. I’m free to be anyone I want to be now. But they don’t want Paolo. They don’t want Joaquim. They don’t even want Mat Iwasaki. No, no, they want this . . . *(Pulls the sides of his eyes upwards and makes his teeth appear bucktoothed)* But after a while they don’t even want me for that anymore. Why should they, Mama? They got white guys playing me now. I mean, I killed myself for this? For this? And then I get this phone call. I can’t believe it. And I get to be—what? The lead? Opposite a beautiful woman? In a romantic love story? AH-HH! Yes, yes, finally the clouds have parted and Buddha has reached out and tapped me. ME. Because I’m the golden boy—right, Mama?—as I’m pulling down my zipper. I’m the one who’s supposed to carry on the family name—my pants bunched up around my feet. I’m Mama’s boy, Mama’s boy—see, see the “Akari brightness.” I’m shining, shining—I’m a movie star.

(Dim to darkness on MAT and DOROTHY.)

Act Three

▲
Fish
Head
Soup
Sutra chanting. VICTOR lit at koi pond holding the white towel. Staring at the water and humming the song. He slowly wades into the pond of bluish watery lights. Plunges the cloth into the water and pulls up a struggling Moe covered in the dripping white towel. He stands for a moment, holding the flopping fish in his hands, trying to summon the will for what he must do next. Then, grabbing Moe's head, he jerks it back. Moe stops moving. VICTOR holds the fish tightly to himself. Dim to darkness on VICTOR.

Cross-fade to VICTOR and PAPA. VICTOR approaches PAPA. In his hands he is holding Moe wrapped in the white towel.

VICTOR: Papa? Papa? Here. I won't walk away. I'm not going to leave you behind. This is for you. I got it for you. (VICTOR is extending it to PAPA. But he doesn't move to take it. VICTOR sets it in his lap.) Papa? Please? You have to take this. You have to . . .

(VICTOR, frustrated, stares at the unmoving PAPA.)

VICTOR (becoming angry): It's your fault, Papa. It's your fault Mama's acting this way. You gotta open your mouth, make words come out, make everything all right again. Papa? Papa?

(VICTOR gives up. Turns and exits. PAPA sits for a moment unmoving. Then, slowly looks down at Moe and picks the fish up. Holds it with both hands in front of him. Begins to hum the song. Dim to darkness on PAPA.)

The sound of a large truck horn. DOROTHY lit driving a car. With her friend. Thick fog. The truck roars by, passing them.

DOROTHY: No, you don't understand. I wear the kimono for work, only for work—I don't even know how to tie the obi right anymore—this fog, I hate this fog. (Beat) Why do you like me, huh? I mean, what do you want from me? No, no, I don't want to go there, I said I don't want to . . . You

Act Three

▲
Fish
Head
Soup
see this, this woman who's supposed to be the answer to all your fantasies—waiting on you hand and foot, giving in to your every wish, and in bed I'm supposed to know everything, be dirty and still be innocent—but I'm not that, I'm not yet, I find myself . . . What do you want from me, huh? What the hell do you want from me? (Listening) "What do I want from you?" . . . (Dim to darkness.)

Lights up on the Iwasaki household. VICTOR is already seated at the dinner table, his hammer in front of him. And an animated PAPA is dragging MAT, who was just about to leave with his bag, to the table. Both VICTOR and MAT stare at PAPA.

PAPA (shoving MAT along): I caught me a big one, a real big one. Couldn't believe my luck. First cast, hauled that sucker in. Bled it right there in the boat. Decided to come right home. No use (PAPA has pushed MAT into his seat.) letting the meat sit all day out in the open. Scaled and gutted it right in the kitchen sink. The meat should be so tasty.

(DOROTHY enters. She appears very upset.)

PAPA: Mama! Mama, just in time. Sit, sit, sit . . .

DOROTHY (overlapping, being dragged to the table): What's going on? Papa? Papa, what's—Victor? What is . . .

PAPA: . . . right over here where you always sit. There. Everyone ready? (PAPA rushes to the stove and brings over a big pot.) Fish head soup. (Starts to ladle it out) Just like old times, huh? Your grandpa used to make this dish for the family on special occasions. Soup. Fish soup. It's made from all the leftovers. After you clean the fish, fillet it good, what's left? The real good stuff. Tail, bones—but it's still got meat on it—and the best part, the head. Fish head.

My papa would throw that stuff in a big pot, cook it and cook it—and no salt, no MSG, nothing—only the natural flavors coming out. And then we'd all sit down to eat. He

Act Three

Fish

got first pick and he always took the head. Best part, he'd say. Pop out the eyeballs, suck the meat off the lips, and the cheeks. Ahh, the cheek meat was the best part of all. Delicacy.

Head

Otosan said, fish head soup, when it's good and the family is all sitting around eating together—Mama, Papa, the kids—a man can never feel alone. You can feel your entire family all there. Even the dead ones, Ojjiisan, Obaasan, and back and back, all your ancestors from the old country sitting around inhaling the good smell of that fish soup just like they used to make it. And the babies that are going to be born tomorrow and the years to come—they're all sitting around the pot, too. All there, everyone there. Sharing this one pot of soup.

Soup

(The food has been ladled out and PAPA begins to eat. The others sit, unsure as to what to make of his behavior.)

PAPA (noticing): Eat! Eat!

(They all begin to eat in silence, stealing glances at PAPA and each other. PAPA eats without looking up. MAT watches him.)

MAT: He's still crazy.

VICTOR: Don't say that.

MAT: Look at him, he doesn't know we're here. Papa? Papa? See. He's just reliving some memory or something.

(DOROTHY starts to giggle. It's almost on the verge of becoming a crying jag.)

DOROTHY: I'm sorry, it's just—forget it. No, no, I should share this. Papa? Victor? A friend saw Mat's movie. You know the one he did in Tokyo? You know what kind of movie it is? A pornographic one. X-rated. Mat's a porno star . . . *(Stops giggling)* I'm sorry. There, I'm okay now.

VICTOR: I saw you.

(DOROTHY doesn't understand.)

VICTOR: I saw you. With your friend. I followed you. And

Act Three

you know where you went? To the same place I take my customers. Those hotels. I saw you, Mama.

(DOROTHY stares at VICTOR. MAT starts to laugh as he makes the realization.)

MAT: Some friend told you? Hah, you saw me, not some friend, *you* saw me. And you saw me in my moment of glory after all. How'd I look? Huh? You're disgusted, you're ashamed? Mama, you're my biggest fan! *(Beat)* I only act, Mama. I don't live this shit.

DOROTHY: What? You expect me to be with this man? I'm supposed to sleep with this child, with this . . .

VICTOR: Say something, Papa. Papa? Please say something . . .

DOROTHY: Oh, he won't say anything.

VICTOR: He used to. He used to talk all the time. Tell me stories about Grandpa and . . .

DOROTHY: He never talked to me. He grunted. He pointed. He . . .

(DOROTHY breaks down. For a moment all we hear is DOROTHY's crying. Turns to PAPA.)

DOROTHY: He never wanted me, he never touched me. He drove me away . . .

PAPA *(mumbling to himself)*: Rumors, rumors . . .

DOROTHY: He drove me away with his silence . . .

PAPA: Rumors, rumors—they're going to ship us back to Japan, rumors, rumors, put us in prison camps. But Papa just laughs. So Japan attacks Pearl Harbor—he's a big-shot farmer with connections. He just laughs. All his friends are big-shot farmers. And they're hakujin, white.

Then the notice comes. He gets mad. He doesn't laugh, he gets so mad. He's going to get his farmer friends to sign a petition and he's going to send it to the governor himself. Hell, they aren't going to kick Togo Iwasaki off his farm—no, no, no.

"Come, you come with me. I'll show you how it's done."

▲ Act Three

Fish

We drive to Mr. Crawford's. We sit down in his living room. Papa asks him to sign the petition so he can stay. But Mr. Crawford says no. He's very sorry, he keeps apologizing. But Papa gets so mad, he cusses the man up and down.

Head

We drive to the next friend's farm. This man says no, too. "No, no," all these hakujin friends speaking such good English—"No, no," to my papa. And Papa so proud, so proud, getting smaller and smaller, getting bent over and old like the sickness is getting into him, eating him up.

Soup

(Pause.)

I don't want to see it, but I see it, the sickness. I see it everywhere. In the eyes, the eyes of Papa's farmer friends, smiling, filled with so much smiling hate. The newspapers, the newspapers, Mr. Lippmann, Mr. Lippmann, the newspapers screaming all ripped up and shredded with lies—we don't signal submarines, we aren't spies, and the voice on the radio—Mr. Hughes, Mr. Hughes, filled with disease, all lies making us sick. And the long train ride, the train ride to the camp, the camp, the barbed wire, twisting, crawling with it. And Mama looking at Papa, "The camp did that, the camp did it," and me knowing it's not true, it's not true, because I could always see it. It was always there, the sickness. A part of the land. The land itself. And the moment you leave your mama's stomach it begins to feed on you. Entering your body, your blood, your mind—so that your thoughts, your thinking, it's all filled with the sickness. The sickness that is pushing and moving your life with its silent hands. Cutting its way into your skin with the lies, into your body, all inside of me. Eating me up, like a cancer, eating me away . . .

(Pause.)

My children. My sons . . . Mat, Mat doesn't have it, the sickness. "Stay away." He's my hope. "Don't come near me, you'll get it!" He doesn't carry it. He's not my son. He's my hope. Mat's not my son. Victor. Victor's Papa's child.

Act Three ▲

Victor's my son. And this is his house. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

(Pause. To DOROTHY.)

"Mama, see! See!" But Mama can't see it. "Look, look, it's everywhere!" Mama can't see it, Mama can't see it. *(Beat)* But Mama has it. Mama has it.

Fish

Head

DOROTHY *(resisting)*: I don't have it, I don't have it, I don't have the disease. I don't. I don't . . . *(Continues.)*

Soup

(While DOROTHY speaks, VICTOR starts banging his hammer against the walls.)

VICTOR *(overlapping)*: I'm fixing the house, ripping out all the no-good stuff. I'm fixing the house. I'm fixing the house . . . *(Continues.)*

(MAT grabs his carry bag.)

MAT: This is just too much. It's just too goddamn much. I'm dead, okay? I'm not your son. I'm gone . . .

(As MAT steps up onto the dining room table, he's lit in a pool of light. Rest of the stage goes to half. MAT looks out as he hears someone yell at him.)

MAT *(speaking to some toughs, challenging them)*: What'd you say? What'd you say to me? What the hell did you say!

(MAT is suddenly struck, then hit again and again.

The violent beating is underscored by loud percussive sounds. The rest of the family members watch in horror. Then, the beating done, MAT stumbles off the table as lights are brought up on the house. He's bleeding, shirt ripped. He can barely walk and stumbles around knocking things over. These actions echo a bit of his earlier "becoming a fish" sequence.

As MAT speaks, PAPA, DOROTHY, and VICTOR "hear" his words. It touches something deep within. They begin to shake, moans begin to come from them. Their sound grows louder, turning into a wail. The group wail is punctuated by angry cathartic shouts. Their wail is underscored by the whirling sound of wind building to a roar. In the final climax, the house is blown apart by blowers upstage.)

Act Three

Fish
Head
Soup

MAT: They get out of the car, these three guys. They surround me. They think I'm going to back down. No, no, no . . . I get right in their faces. Right in their faces. I ain't no coward, Papa. And I begin to beat on them. All three of them. I'm pounding their faces in . . .

And then I hear this tiny voice. Coming from somewhere deep inside me. I couldn't recognize it before. And I wouldn't put a name to it because I knew if I listened to it I would die. But this time. This time I had to listen to it. And I knew what it was. It was you, Papa, you. And as I listened to you inside me, I felt the fear. The intimidation. The sickness. And I began to cower in front of these white men. And as they began to hit me and kick me I still had to listen. To let your voice grow and grow and fill me with its sound . . .

I felt you inside of me. But Papa, it wasn't just the sickness. No, no, it was much, much more. (PAPA, DOROTHY, and VICTOR begin to moan.) It was the ability to see it, give the sickness a name. You didn't know that, Papa, did you? To know its face and be able to hurl it back out of one's soul. Shout it out of one's being. (Growing louder, becoming a wail) And if we do? When we do? They'll run, Papa. They'll have to run because it won't be just my voice, or your voice all alone, no, no, no. It will be our voice—yours and mine, Mama's and Victor's, Ojii-chan's and Obaa-chan's, on and on! GATHERING LIKE A STORM DEEP DOWN INSIDE AND HURLING OUT WITH A FURY OF BEATINGS, HOWLS AND SCREAMS! THEY'LL HAVE TO RUN—CUT, BOUND, RIPPED TO SHREDS BY ITS FORCE!! . . .

(Silence. Everything subsides.)

I felt you inside and I did not die. I am your son. I am your son, Papa. And this, this is my family . . .

(The walls of the house have collapsed, blown away by the fury of the wails, revealing the clean framework of the

Act Three

Fish
Head
Soup

house—pipes, wiring—pristine and glowing. A large full moon is lit upstage. The family members all look out.)

PAPA: It's a clear night.

DOROTHY: The moon . . .

MAT: A huge glowing heart . . .

DOROTHY: No, more like a . . .

MAT: Yes?

VICTOR: A window . . .

MAT: Into? . . .

DOROTHY: Yes? . . .

PAPA: A house . . .

VICTOR: Of dreams . . .

DOROTHY: Yes, dreams, a house of dreams . . .

MAT: Forgotten, buried, lost . . .

DOROTHY: And then remembered . . .

VICTOR: Remembered . . .

(Pause. The family members all look at each other.)

PAPA: It's a clear night.

VICTOR: I see . . .

DOROTHY: I see . . .

(MAT finds an imaginary pole in his hands and he's getting a bite. MAT snags and he's caught something, something big. As he begins to reel it in, it fights and struggles against him. They all continue to gaze out.

As the lights fade, the structure of the house, along with the moon, continues to glow for a beat. Then fade to black.)

[END OF PLAY]