

IN AMERICA

A New Musical
Professor Hal Harper

12 - Shiny Toyota Tercel

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15 - Oh Mama, Can You Hear Me?

16 - Tick Tock Listen to the
Ticking Clock

17 - Tax the Rich

18 – The Last Days of Roosevelt
Junior High

Act II

Shiny Toyota Tercel

As Act II opens, we see two neighborhood women pulling home shopping carts on a local street, discussing their day's grocery shopping and the loss of manners in society in general which leads to a discussion of the vandalism incident which occurred at the school. They in turn run into their neighbor, Mrs. Chan, an immigrant woman with a still perceptible accent as she is piling her two children into the family car. Wishing her well as she goes driving down the road in her Shiny Toyota Tercel, the two women begin to sing her story which is true for so many other immigrants who have "made it" here in America.

(I wrote this one day when I saw a housewife of Chinese descent driving happily down the road in her shiny Toyota Tercel. Perhaps Toyota will reissue the model if the song is a hit, or they'll issue a cease and desist letter prohibiting me from using the name at all - more likely, in which case I'll change "Shiny Toyota Tercel" to "Shiny New Automobile." I should be so lucky as to be contacted by Toyota in this regard. H.H.)

Preceding Dialogue

From the house across the street where the shiny Toyota Tercel is parked enters MRS. CHAN with TWO YOUNG CHILDREN in tow. An assimilated Chinese immigrant, MRS. CHAN still retains a perceptible accent.

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1

Oh, look! There's Mrs. Chan (waving) Hi, Mrs. Chan!

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #2

(waving)

Hi, Mrs. Chan.

MRS. CHAN returns the waves.

MRS. CHAN

Oh, good afternoon, lady. (sic) How are you?

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1

Fine, Mrs. Chan. Where are you and your lovely children off to this evening?

MRS. CHAN

We go my husband's office meet him. We go out dinner tonight!

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #2

Oh, that sounds fun. Where are you going?

MRS. CHAN

New Chinese restaurant, in downtown.

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1

Well, have a nice time. Say hello to Mr. Chan for me.

MRS. CHAN

Thank you, Lady (sic). I will. See you later. Bye.

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1 & #2

Bye.

MRS. CHAN loads her CHILDREN into the car and buckles them in.

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #2

She's such a nice woman.

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1

She sure is. I'm glad she wasn't there when that band of hooligans vandalized the school the other day.

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1

Oh, no. She doesn't go to school anymore. True, maybe her English isn't perfect but... she's been in this country now for over twenty years.

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #2

(pointedly)

And she and her husband have done pretty well for themselves.

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1

That's true.

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #2

And why not?

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1

Yes. Why not?

MRS. CHAN starts up her car engine and pulls out of the driveway. As SHE goes driving down the road, NEIGHBORHOOD WOMEN #1 begins to sing.

(up music: (Shiny Toyota Tercel)

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1

SHE GOES DRIVING DOWN THE ROAD
IN HER SHINY TOYOTA TERCEL
AND SHE KNOWS IT DOESN'T MATTER
HER BURDENS HAVE BEEN LIFTED

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #2

AND NOBODY SEES HER SMILING
AS SHE THINKS ABOUT CHINA
AND OF WHERE SHE USED TO LIVE
IN A HOVEL

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1 & #2

IT DON'T MATTER
WHERE SHE CAME FROM
NOW SHE'S HERE
AND IT DOESN'T MATTER

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1

AND SHE GOES DRIVING DOWN THE FREEWAY
IN HER SHINY TOYOTA TERCEL
AND SHE KNOWS IT DOESN'T MATTER
HER KIDS WILL GO TO COLLEGE

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #2

AND NOBODY SEES HER SHINING
AS SHE THINKS ABOUT CHINA
AND THE BOY FROM THE VILLAGE NEXT DOOR
WHOM ONE DAY SHE WOULD MARRY

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1 & #2

IT DON'T MATTER
WHERE SHE CAME FROM
NOW SHE'S HERE
AND IT DOESN'T MATTER

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1

SO SHE GOES DRIVING ACROSS THE GOLDEN GATE
IN HER SHINY TOYOTA TERCEL
AND SHE KNOWS IT DOESN'T MATTER
SHE'S ALREADY MADE IT

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #2

AND NOBODY SEES HER SHINING
AS SHE THINKS ABOUT CHINA
AND THE LONG ROAD THAT SHE'S DRIVEN
FROM THAT HOVEL

NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1 & #2

IT DON'T MATTER
WHERE SHE CAME FROM
NOW SHE'S HERE
AND IT DOESN'T MATTER

(Blackout)

Daydreams

Having returned to the classroom for the first time since the vandalism, Mr. Johnson attempts to ease the students' troubled minds with a creative writing assignment. As a spotlight roves around the classroom, each student's daydream is given voice.

(The students return to the classroom still stunned from the previous week's tumult. In a reflective writing exercise, Mr. Johnson asks his students to relax, daydream and write down their thoughts on paper. The resulting number sheds light on the memories, hopes and dreams shared by many in the classroom and around the world. H.H.)

Preceding Dialogue

MR. JOHNSON

That's right! She's daydreaming! Now what is daydreaming?

LAVONNA

(shrugging)

Daydreaming is daydreaming.

MR. JOHNSON

Well... yes, Lavonna, but what is daydreaming?

MEI LI takes out a dictionary and reads from it.

MEI LI

Daydreaming is "having a happy or pleasant imagining about oneself or one's future."

MR. JOHNSON

That's right, Mei Li, but (mildly scolding) you're not supposed to read the answer from a dictionary.

*MEI LI winces slightly at this sleight rebuke.
MR. JOHNSON continues.*

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

When you daydream, you usually are not thinking about things that are happening around you at the time, but something different, something special, something that could be far, far away. You may be thinking about your friends or family, or a place you've never been before. Maybe it's a fantasy. You might find yourself in an enchanted forest, with rocks and trees and magical streams all around you.

The STUDENTS brighten at this image.

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

Or maybe you're driving down a desert road going a hundred miles an hour... or just enjoying a warm spring day with the one you love...

At this, RICO looks to ROSETTA who looks back.

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

Who knows? It could be anything. It's your dream... It's your daydream.

SOPANNY raises her hand.

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

Yes, Sopanny.

SOPANNY

Teacher, can you daydream only in the day?

MR. JOHNSON

No, Sopanny. You can daydream anytime. In the day, in the night...

HE looks at the clock on the wall which reads nine o'clock.

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

(with mirth)

... even at nine o'clock in the morning. Just so you're awake when you're doing it. (to JOSE) You hear that, Jose. You have to be awake first.

JOSE

I'm awake.

MR. JOHNSON

Just checking.

*JOSE and some of the STUDENTS laugh.
SOPANNY nods.*

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

Now what I'd like you to do is just sit back and relax... and daydream. You can daydream about anything you like... the past, the present, the future. Anything... Anything at all. It's your daydream.

Beat as HE surveys the class.

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

And when you're ready, on a clean sheet of paper, I want you to write down your daydream. Don't worry about grammar, spelling or punctuation. Just write. Now during this exercise, I am going to lower the lights and play some soft music to help you think and write more freely. Alright?

The STUDENTS nod. All but ENRIQUE who seems to be already lost in thought.

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

Enrique? Are you still with us?

ENRIQUE responds dreamily.

ENRIQUE

Oh yes, teacher. In my country, when I was with my father working in the fields and it was very hot, the crew manager would sometimes give us a break. At that time, I could just sit there and daydream.

MR. JOHNSON

(sympathetically)

Yes, Enrique. It's good to daydream. It's good for your heart, mind, body and soul. (to the class) Now class. Let's begin.

MR. JOHNSON walks over to the light switch and dims the light. He then walks to the AUDIO PLAYER and presses the "play" button.

(up music: Daydreams)

As soft music fills the air, MR. JOHNSON sits at his desk and begins to grade a stack of papers. As the STUDENTS start to absorb both the mood and soft music, THEY begin to daydream.

A roving spotlight shines upon the STUDENTS illuminating their thoughts as THEY write. It finds ENRIQUE first.

ENRIQUE

I CAN SEE ME IN THE FIELD
ON A WARM AND SUMMER DAY
WITH MY FATHER
AS THE CROWS ARE FLYING BY
WITH THE DEVIL IN THEIR EYE
WE GO ON LAUGHING

MANY DAYS HAVE PASSED AND GONE
SINCE I WALKED ALONG THE DAWN
WITH MY FATHER

I CAN SEE HIM SMILING STILL
AND I GUESS I ALWAYS WILL
THE FIELD IS CALLING

DAYDREAMS, DAYDREAMS
DAYDREAMS, DAYDREAMS

JOSEF is vexed.

JOSEF

LOST! WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO LEARN
STUCK HERE IN THIS CLASS
I'VE DONE IT ALL BEFORE
I WAS A DOCTOR

HELL! WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO
STUCK HERE IN THIS TOWN
WHERE I DON'T UNDERSTAND
A THING THEY'RE SAYING

JOSEF (Continued)

THE PRIDE OF MY CLASS
THE PLUM JOBS JUST WAITING
FOR ME TO ACCEPT THEM
AND LOADS OF RESPECT

BUT THERE WERE LIMITS
A HUNDRED DOLLARS A MONTH
YES THERE WERE LIMITS
A TWO DOLLAR HAT

DAYDREAMS, DAYDREAMS
DAYDREAMS, DAYDREAMS

*VUONG ANH raises his head from his
paper and sings longingly.*

VUONG ANH

SHE WAS MY WIFE
I HEAR HER CALLING
SHE WAS MY LIFE
BUT NOW SHE'S GONE

THE SOLDIERS TOOK
MY CHILDREN'S MOTHER
BUT IN ME NOW
HER SPIRIT CARRIES ON

I SEE HER STANDING
BY THE OPEN WINDOW
I SEE HER STANDING THERE
HER EYES HER GAZE
SHE COMES BEFORE ME NOW
AND SHE IS CALLING
OH, HOW I YEARN
FOR THOSE FORGOTTEN DAYS

DAYDREAMS, DAYDREAMS
DAYDREAMS, DAYDREAMS

*ROSETTA dreams of the past and of better
things to come.*

ROSETTA

GRASS UNSEEN
 SKY SO GREY
 HOUSES OF CARDBOARD AND TIN
 DUMPS BY THE ROAD
 A DIRTY OLD WELL
 AND NEVER A PAPER OR PEN
 AND ONLY A DOLL FOR A FRIEND
 I'LL NEVER GO BACK THERE AGAIN

FOR I KNOW THAT
 LIFE IS WORTH LIVING
 MANY WONDERS THEY LIE IN STORE FOR ME
 AND I KNOW THAT
 LIFE IS JUST BEGINNING
 I THANK G-D FOR THE WONDROUS SIGHTS I SEE

DAYDREAMS, DAYDREAMS
 DAYDREAMS, DAYDREAMS

*MEI LI's daydream holds no surprise. It is of
 her teacher, Mr. Johnson.*

MEI LI

THERE WE SIT
 AT THE PARK
 HOLDING HAND IN HAND
 HOPING HE WOULD LIGHT THE SPARK
 MAKING IT SO GRAND
 ROBINS SING AND EAGLES FLY
 SWIFTLY THROUGH THE LAND
 OFFERING HIM MY SWEET PERFUME
 WILL HE UNDERSTAND?

DAYDREAMS, DAYDREAMS
 DAYDREAMS, DAYDREAMS

STUDENTS

PEACEFUL LIFE
NO MORE STRIFE
BEAUTY IN THE LAND
DAY IS DONE
GONE THE SUN
ALL WILL LEND A HAND

WHO KNOWS WHAT TOMORROW BRINGS
WILL WE PROUDLY STAND?
NOW AT LAST
WORST HAS PASSED
TIME TO START AGAIN

DAYDREAMS, DAYDREAMS
DAYDREAMS, DAYDREAMS

It's Their Big Test (Or Is It Mine)?

As the class ends, Mr. Johnson announces the final test. He sees his own failure or success now as contingent upon the students. Consequently, he joins forces with them as they strive for their mutual success.

(In this zany number inspired by the Marx Brothers, Mei Li seems less concerned with the final test than with Mr. Johnson and uses the moment to profess her love for her teacher who lost in the spirit of the moment, largely ignores her causing her to run from the classroom in tears at song's end. H.H.)

Preceding Dialogue

MR. JOHNSON

(a final call to the class)

Remember: Don't forget to study. Next Friday is the big test!

The STUDENTS exit. All but MEI LI who has once again stayed behind to speak with MR. JOHNSON after class. Unaware SHE is there, HE begins to gather up his papers. MEI LI calls to him.

MEI LI

Mr. Johnson?

His thoughts on the test, HE cannot hear her. Instead HE begins to lament his own test anxieties.

(up music: It's Their Big Test)

MR. JOHNSON

IT'S THEIR BIG TEST
OR IS IT MINE?
IT'S THEIR GREAT QUEST
OR IS IT MINE?

IT'S THEIR FAILURE OR SUCCESS
OR IS IT MINE?
PERHAPS THAT IS THE REASON WHY
I'M TREMBLING INSIDE

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

IT REALLY IS A STRANGE AND FUNNY FEELING
WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW QUITE EXACTLY WHAT TO DO
IT SEEMS AS IF YOUR HEAD IS SIMPLY REELING
AND YOU ARE STUCK LIKE GLUE

IT'S THEIR BIG TEST
OR IS IT MINE?
IT'S THEIR UNREST
OR IS IT MINE?
IT'S THEIR GAME OF CHESS
OR IS IT MINE?
PERHAPS THAT IS THE REASON WHY
I'M TREMBLING INSIDE

*His troubled lament soon turns into a
rallying cry as a growing sense of overtakes
him.*

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

I'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST
I'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST
IT'S PASS OR FAIL
IT'S TOOTH AND NAIL
I'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST

I'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST
ON THIS POINT I OBSESS
WHEN BELL IS RUNG
AND DAY IS DONE
I'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST
(determined)

I've got to pass this test!

*Re-enter the STUDENTS with textbooks in
hand.*

STUDENTS

WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST
WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST
IT'S PASS OR FAIL
IT'S TOOTH AND NAIL
WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST

MR. JOHNSON/STUDENTS

WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST
ON THIS POINT WE OBSESS
WHEN BELL IS RUNG
AND DAY IS DONE
WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST

(determined)

We've got to pass this test!

MEI LI tries again to speak but is drowned out by the fevered pitch of MR. JOHNSON and the STUDENTS.

MEI LI (Continued)

MR. JOHNSON, HOW CAN I EVER TELL YOU?

MR. JOHNSON/STUDENTS

WE'VE GOT TO
WE'VE GOT TO
WE'VE GOT TO
PASS THIS TEST

MEI LI

MR. JOHNSON, HOW COULD I EVEN DARE?

MR. JOHNSON/STUDENTS

IT'S PASS OR FAIL
IT'S TOOTH AND NAIL
WE'VE GOT TO
PASS THIS TEST

MR. JOHNSON, DO YOU EVER NOTICE ME?

WE'VE GOT TO
WE'VE GOT TO
WE'VE GOT TO PASS
THIS TEST

MR. JOHNSON, DO YOU EVEN CARE?

WHEN BELL IS RUNG
AND DAY IS DONE
WE'VE GOT TO
PASS THIS TEST

MR. JOHNSON & STUDENTS (Continued)

We've got to pass this test!

Unable to get through to MR. JOHNSON, MEI LI explodes in frustration.

MEI LI

MR. JOHNSON
DO YOU KNOW I AM HERE?
MR. JOHNSON
OR DO YOU EVEN CARE?
OR AM I JUST ANOTHER STUDENT
SITTING IN THEIR CHAIR?

OH NO
MR. JOHNSON THAT'S NOT FAIR

MEI LI softens her tone.

MEI LI (Continued)

THE HOURS I'VE LONGED TO TELL YOU THE WORDS
THEY'RE NOT IN A TEXTBOOK AND NOTHING I'VE HEARD
IT'S ONLY A FEELING AND MAY SOUND ABSURD
I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU I LOVE YOU
I THINK I'LL TELL YOU I LOVE YOU TODAY
OH PLEASE MR. JOHNSON LOOK MY WAY

*MR. JOHNSON continues to turn a deaf ear
to MEI LI as HE and the other STUDENTS
remain fixated on the test.*

MR. JOHNSON/STUDENTS

WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST
WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST
IT'S PASS OR FAIL
IT'S TOOTH AND NAIL
WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST

WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST
ON THIS POINT WE OBSESS
WHEN BELL IS RUNG
AND DAY IS DONE
WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST

MR. JOHNSON/STUDENTS (Continued)

(determined)

We've got to pass this test!

MEI LI tries again.

MEI LI

Mr. Johnson?

I WANT A MAN
A MAN WHO IS GOOD
A MAN WHO HAS HONOR
AND LIVES LIKE HE SHOULD

I KNOW SUCH A MAN
HE'S THE ONE MAN FOR ME
OH PLEASE MR. JOHNSON
OH HEAR ME MR. JOHNSON
OH PLEASE
I GET DOWN ON MY KNEES

At these words, MEI LI sinks to her knees in despair. Although startled by this display, MR. JOHNSON is quick to react.

MR. JOHNSON

What? What's this? Now come up from off of there, Mei Li. That's not right.

HE pulls MEI LI up from the floor and stands her straight.

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

Now be sensible, Mei Li. Think about what you're saying. Can you imagine?

A TEACHER AND A STUDENT
STROLLING IN THE PARK
GOING TO THE MOVIES
MEETING AFTER DARK?

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

A TEACHER AND A STUDENT
HOLDING HANDS
AND MAKING SPARKS?
I THINK NOT MEI LI
I THINK NOT

A 1920's "yaka-hula-hicky-dula" type melody strikes up the band.

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

I'M SORRY MEI LI
THIS THING COULD NEVER BE
A TEACHER-STUDENT FLING
WOULD NEVER DO

THINK ABOUT IT MEI LI
NOT EVEN A CUP OF TEA
OUTSIDE OF THE WALLS OF THE CLASSROOM AND THE HALLS
WOULD EVER DO

REALISTICALLY MEI LI
DON'T YOU THINK THAT IT'D BE CRAZY
IF WE DID THE WHICKY-WHACKY
AND THE HOOTCHIE-KOO?

COMMON SENSIBLY MEI LI
DON'T YOU THINK IT'D MAKE "THE DAILY"
IF WE DID THE TOUCHY-FEELY
AND THE HOW'S BY YOU?

TO YEARN FOR YOUR INSTRUCTOR IT
WOULD NEVER EARN A LAUREATE
AND I'D NOT LIKE MY JOB TO QUIT
FROM SUCH A SCANDAL

FOR ME THE JOY IS TEACHING AND
I DON'T NEED A REPRIMAND
FROM THOSE WHO'VE BEEN SO GRAND
TO LEND A HANDLE

REALISTICALLY MEI LI
DON'T YOU THINK IT'D BE CRAZY
IF WE DID THE WHICKY WHACKY
AND THE WHOOP-TI-DOO

COMMON SENSIBLY MEI LI
DON'T YOU THINK IT'D MAKE "THE DAILY"
IF WE DID THE TOUCHY-FEELY
AND THE YOU KNOW WHO

OUR CHANCES'D BE SO USELESS THEN
OUR FACES SPREAD ON CNN
I'D HAVE TO QUIT MY JOB
AND MOVE TO KENYA

MEI LI

Kenya?

MR. JOHNSON

Could be.

MEI LI

(undaunted)

IF YOU CHOSE THAT FAR OFF PLACE
I WOULD SURELY BRING MY LACE
AND WE COULD FIND A PLACE
IN NAIROBI

*As this, MR. JOHNSON throws out his
arms in exasperation as the STUDENTS
begin to surround the two in a Busby
Berkeley inspired dance number.*

STUDENTS

REALISTICALLY MEI LI
DON'T YOU THINK IT'D BE CRAZY
IF YOU DID THE WHICKY WHACKY
AND THE HOOTCHIE-KOO
COMMON SENSIBLY MEI LI
DON'T YOU THINK IT'D MAKE "THE DAILY"
IF YOU DID THE TOUCHY-FEELY
AND THE YOU KNOW WHO

*Caught in the swirl of the movement, MR.
JOHNSON and MEI LI gaze into one
another's eyes for one fleeting moment.
Quickly though they are separated by the
exuberance of the budding scholars all
about them.*

STUDENTS (Continued)

REALISTICALLY MEI LI
DON'T YOU THINK THAT IT'D BE CRAZY
IF YOU DID THE WHICKY WHACKY
AND THE WHOOP-TI-DOO
COMMON SENSIBLY MEI LI
DON'T YOU THINK IT'D MAKE "THE DAILY"
IF YOU DID THE TOUCHY-FEELY
AND THE HOOTCHIE-KOO

AND THE WHOOP-TI-DO
AND THE YOU KNOW WHO
AND THE HOW'S BY YOU

The dance over, MR. JOHNSON stares ahead pensively as HE reprises his original lament.

MR. JOHNSON

IT'S THEIR BIG TEST
OR IS IT MINE
IT'S THEIR GREAT QUEST
OR IS IT MINE
IT'S THEIR FAILURE OR SUCCESS
OR IS IT MINE
PERHAPS THAT IS THE REASON WHY
I'M TREMBLING INSIDE

The STUDENTS, however, are unwilling to end on this note and rally MR. JOHNSON for one final cheer.

MR. JOHNSON & STUDENTS

(with building intensity)

WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST
WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST
IT'S PASS OR FAIL
IT'S TOOTH AND NAIL
WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST

WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST
ON THIS POINT WE OBSESS
WHEN BELL IS RUNG
AND DAY IS DONE
WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST

THEY give a final yell.

WE'VE GOT TO PASS THIS TEST!

*Great hurrahs fill the air as MR. JOHNSON
stands triumphant with his STUDENTS.
Lost in the celebration, no one notices MEI
LI as SHE runs tearfully from the
classroom.*

Oh Mama Can You Hear Me?

Mei Li turns to her dearly departed mother for solace and guidance.

(An admitted tear-jerker, this as of yet unrecorded longer version of an earlier recorded shorter version combines that earlier unrecorded song, "Mei Li Love Song" with the original recorded song, "Oh Mama, Can You Hear Me," a song originally written for my own mother who had passed away earlier that year. The result is now one long ballad with strong Eastern European overtones, some might even say Cantorial, which when complete will total over 9 minutes long. I'm looking forward to finding a singer up to the challenge! Please donate. H. H.)

Preceding Dialogue

Setting: Mei Li's Apartment

At Rise: Distraught over MR. JOHNSON'S rejection of her, MEI LI kneels at the family altar.

SHE bows to the black-embossed photograph before her and lights a stick of incense.

Dressed in her nightgown, she picks up the photograph and gazes at it and sits with it on the bed.

MEI LI

Oh, mama, mama, mama.

SHE breaks down in sobs.

MEI LI (Continued)

Oh, mama I miss you so much. I wish you were here now, mama. I want to tell you of this wonderful man I have met. He is a good man, mama. Kind, smart, handsome. True, he is my teacher, mama, but after all... he is a man. I wish you could meet him, mama. After all your struggles to succeed, to become a nurse in our country, to bring us here to America, that you did not live to see your dream of living in America come true... Oh mama, you are gone now, and I am so alone. I thought he cared about

me, mama, but he does not even know how I feel about him, how often I think of him, how much I long for him.

*SHE sobs again. Suddenly, SHE sits up
as if someone has entered the room.*

(searching)

Mama, can you hear me? Mama, are you there?

(up music: Oh Mama, Can You Hear Me?)

MEI LI (Continued)

OH MAMA HERE I SIT ALONE
WONDERING WHERE YOU ARE
WHY YOU WENT SO FAR AWAY

OH MAMA I REMEMBER WHEN
SIMPLER DAYS OF JOY
PLAYING GAMES WITH TOYS AND THEN
WHY DID IT HAVE TO END

BUT NOW HE'S APPEARED TO ME
HE HAS COME INTO ME
AND MY LIFE

HE MEANS SO MUCH TO ME
HE'D BE SO GOOD TO ME
AND MY LIFE
AND I WOULD BE A GOOD WIFE

IT'S FUNNY HOW FATE COMES TO PASS
YET I FEEL THESE FEELINGS WILL ALWAYS LAST
IT'S A ROUGH WAY DOWN THE LONG
AND WINDING ROAD
WHERE IT STOPS WHO CAN KNOW
I LOVE HIM WITH EVERY BREATH I TAKE
OH MAMA CAN YOU ME A GOOD WIFE MAKE?

I'D DO MY BEST
YOU COULD DO THE REST
OH MAMA CAN YOU ME A GOOD WIFE MAKE?

*MEI LI rises from her bed, a captive of
the swirling music all around her.*

MEI LI (Continued)

OH THE TIME I REMEMBER OH SO WELL
WHEN MY MOTHER FACED THE TORTURES OF LIVING HELL
THE STRUGGLE SHE FOUGHT
HOPED COULD BE WON
BUT MAMA IT COULDN'T BE DONE

YOU KNEW THE END WAS NEAR
AS A NURSE OF THIRTY YEARS
YET YOUR SECRET YOU KEPT SO WELL INSIDE
BUT AS THE HOUR DREW
YOU CALLED ME CLOSE TO YOU
AND KISSED ME ONCE MORE BEFORE YOU DIED

OH MAMA CAN YOU HEAR ME
OH MAMA ARE YOU THERE
OH MAMA CAN YOU HEAR ME
OH MAMA ARE YOU THERE

YOU WALKED TEN THOUSAND MILES IN THE SNOW
YOU LABORED LONG AND HARD TO WATCH US GROW
TO WORK AT BREAK OF DAWN
THROUGH THE NIGHT YOU CARRIED ON
OH MAMA, WHY DID YOU HAVE TO GO?

HOW SPLENDID WERE THE DAYS
WITH YOUR WARM AND WINNING WAYS
SO MANY ILLS YOU CURED EXCEPT YOUR OWN
THEN SHADOWS FILLED THE ROOM
AS YOU TOUCHED THE HAND OF DOOM
AND I WAS LEFT TO FACE THIS WORLD ALONE

OH MAMA CAN YOU HEAR ME
OH MAMA ARE YOU THERE
OH MAMA CAN YOU HEAR ME
OH MAMA ARE YOU THERE

MEI LI (Continued)

YOU EASED THE PAIN OF THOSE BOTH BENT AND SCARRED
THE LOTUS BLOSSOMS BURST FORTH IN OUR BACKYARD
YOU DANCED IN THE LIVING ROOM HALL
LIKE A QUEEN DANCED AT HER BALL
AND YOUR CHILDREN WERE YOUR ROYAL GUARD

YOUR LAUGHTER YOUR JOYS
YOUR SONGS FOR GIRLS AND BOYS
YOUR LOVE IT MADE OUR HOUSE SO SAFE AND WARM
YET NOW IN DEAD OF NIGHT
I SEEK YOUR GUIDING LIGHT
AND PRAY TO FIND YOUR SHELTER FROM THE STORM

OH MAMA CAN YOU HEAR ME
OH MAMA ARE YOU THERE
OH MAMA CAN YOU HEAR ME
OH MAMA ARE YOU THERE

OH MAMA CAN YOU HEAR ME
OH MAMA ARE YOU THERE
OH MAMA CAN YOU HEAR ME
OH MAMA I KNOW YOU'RE THERE

*In one hand, MEI LI clutches her
mother's PHOTOGRAPH close to her
while the other, outstretched, reaches
out to heaven.*

Tick Tock Listen to the Ticking Clock

As the clock ticks away, the students give voice to their own hopes and aspirations as they take their final exam. Each considers what the test means to them.

((This song again sheds light on the students' past and hopes for the Future, the clock signifying the shortness of time one has on earth to complete one's goals. H.H.))

Preceding Dialogue

MR. JOHNSON

You will have exactly one hour to complete the test. We will begin when the clock strikes nine.

All eyes turn to the clock which reads 8:59. As the clock strikes 9:00, MR. JOHNSON instructs his STUDENTS to begin.

MR. JOHNSON (Continued)

Alright class. It's nine o'clock. Turn your tests over. You may begin. Break a leg.

MR. JOHNSON proctors the test with an exacting eye as the STUDENTS turn their tests over and begin to write. As the ticking clock becomes louder, the hands on it move noticeably, illustrating the passage of time. While working, the STUDENTS sing.

(up music: Tick Tock Tick Tock)

STUDENTS

TICK TOCK TICK TOCK
LISTEN TO THE BEATING CLOCK
TICK TOCK TICK TOCK
LISTEN TO THE TICK TOCK TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK TICK TOCK

The STUDENTS return to their tests. All but JOSEF who shrugs his shoulders and muses about what the test means to him.

JOSEF

OH BACK IN MOSCOW
A TEST MEANT EVERYTHING
IT WAS YOUR TICKET UP AND DOWN
IT WAS YOUR BRASS RING
BUT HERE IT'S DIFFERENT
THERE IS NO THREAT OF STORM OR STRIFE
AND THOUGH IT DOESN'T MATTER
STILL I'D LIKE TO DO WELL FOR MY WIFE

*The STUDENTS raise their heads and sing
in determined chorus.*

STUDENTS

GODDA MOVE UP
GODDA MOVE UP
GODDA MAKE IT
CAN'T GET ENOUGH 'NUFF 'NUFF
MY SPIRITS ARE SO HIGH
I WANNA TOUCH THE SKY
GODDA MOVE UP
GODDA MOVE UP
UP UP UP

*The STUDENTS return to their tests, all but
JOSE who stares straight ahead and sings
of life's ambitions.*

JOSE

I'M NOT GONNA BE NO LOUSY GRAPE PICKER
OR A SHOE SHINE BOY OR A CANDLE STICK MAKER
I'M NOT GONNA WORK IN NO FAST FOOD JOINT
OR A CHEAP GARAGE
AND LET SOMEONE POINT
AND SAY "SEE"
AND THINK THEY'RE BETTER THAN ME
I'M GONNA MAKE IT
I'M GONNA SUCCEED

The hands on the clock move forward.

STUDENTS

TICK TOCK TICK TOCK
LISTEN TO THE BEATING CLOCK
TICK TOCK TICK TOCK
LISTEN TO THE TICK TOCK TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK TICK TOCK

*The STUDENTS return to their tests. All but
NGUYEN TRAN who seems unusually
reflective.*

NGUYEN TRAN

THE TIME OF HUSTLE IN SAIGON
THE LESSONS OF KENTUCKY
AND NOW THIS LIFE IN SAN FRANCISCO
SOME FOLKS WOULD SAY I'M LUCKY
THOUGH I'VE BEEN BAD
MY GI DAD
SOMETIMES I WAS SO HATEFUL
BUT NOW I'VE PEACE
A BRAND-NEW LEASE
TO ALL I AM SO GRATEFUL

STUDENTS

GODDA MOVE UP
GODDA MOVE UP
GODDA MAKE IT
CAN'T GET ENOUGH 'NUFF 'NUFF
MY SPIRITS ARE SO HIGH
I WANNA TOUCH THE SKY
GODDA MOVE UP
GODDA MOVE UP
UP UP UP

The STUDENTS return to their
tests. ENRIQUE philosophizes.

ENRIQUE

THROUGH TRIALS AND TRAILS I'VE FOUND THIS LAND
WOULD SOME THINK ME NOW ONLY HALF A MAN?
MY FATHER'S WORDS I HEAR AGAIN
WITHOUT AN EDUCATION
YOU'RE DOOMED TO LIFE'S FRUSTRATIONS
YOU'LL NEVER BE
THOUGH YOU'LL LONG TO BE
MORE THAN JUST A PAIR OF HANDS

*The hands on the clock move forward. The
STUDENTS sing.*

STUDENTS

TICK TOCK TICK TOCK
LISTEN TO THE BEATING CLOCK
TICK TOCK TICK TOCK
LISTEN TO THE TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK TICK TOCK

*The STUDENTS return to their tests, all but
MEI LI who continues to focus on MR.
JOHNSON.*

MEI LI

WOULD HE NOW NOTICE ME
AFTER EVERYTHING WE'VE BEEN THROUGH?
IT'S SO HARD TO SIT HERE AND FACE HIM AGAIN
I'M SO SORRY
I'M SO BLUE

STILL WHAT WOULD I GIVE FOR JUST ONE LOOK
TO BE SWEEPED AWAY IN HIS ARMS?
HOW SAFE I WOULD FEEL IN HIS WARM EMBRACE
OH, I'D GIVE HIM ALL MY CHARMS
OH, I'D GIVE HIM ALL MY CHARMS

*The STUDENTS join together for one final
determined chorus.*

STUDENTS

GODDA MOVE UP
GODDA MOVE UP
GODDA MAKE IT
CAN'T GET ENOUGH 'NUFF 'NUFF

MY SPIRITS ARE SO HIGH
I WANNA TOUCH THE SKY
GODDA MOVE UP
GODDA MOVE UP
UP UP UP

The clock ticks away.

STUDENTS (Continued)

TICK TOCK TICK TOCK
LISTEN TO THE TICKING CLOCK
TICK TOCK TICK TOCK
LISTEN TO THE TICK TOCK TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK TICK TOCK

The clock strikes 10:00. It has come full-circle. The test is over.

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Tax the Rich

The teachers are in a testy mood and begin to criticize the current system which they perceive to favor corporations over schools and social programs.

(No doubt these teachers like many, share these sentiments. The last of five amateur recordings sung poorly by yours truly. Please donate. Thank you. H.H.)

Preceding Dialogue

MR. DUGAN

Who knows? In the richest country in the world, how come there isn't enough money going back to the communities who are just being taxed to death and not seeing anything for it in return?

MR. JOHNSON

That's one way to put it.

MS. NEILSEN

There's never enough money.

MR. DANIELS

Oh, there's money, alright. It's just not being spent where it's needed and that's right here in River City.

MR. ALBERT

I thought we were in San Francisco.

MS. NEILSEN

But how can we get the money?

MR. DUGAN

I know. I've got it! We'll just 'Tax the Rich'!

MR. JOHNSON

Tax the rich?

MS. SIMON

Ain't that a bitch!

MR. DUGAN steps forward.

(up music: Tax the Rich)

MR. DUGAN

WITH MONEY NOT FOR HEALTH CARE
THE OLD, THE SICK, THE BLIND
OR HOMELESS VETS WHO BRAVELY FOUGHT
NOW STONED OUT OF THEIR MINDS
IT GOES INSTEAD TO NAMELESS MEN
HIGH WALLS TO HIDE BEHIND

MS. SIMON

AIN'T THAT A BITCH?
TAX THE RICH

MR. JOHNSON

WHILE MILLIONS LIVE IN POVERTY
AND OTHERS STARVE AND FREEZE
OUR INFRASTRUCTURE'S CRUMBLING
OUR JOBS SENT OVERSEAS
THE WORLD'S A FRIGGING TINDERBOX
WE'RE ALL AFRAID TO SNEEZE

MS. SIMON

AIN'T THAT A BITCH?
TAX THE RICH

TEACHERS

THEY CLAIM THEY CAN'T AFFORD IT
THEY'D RATHER STEAL AND HOARD IT
LET'S OVERTHROW THE BASTARDS
AND SEND THEM ON THEIR WAY

THE TIME FOR TRUTH IS COMING
BEFORE WE TAKE A DRUBBING
LET'S GATHER UP OUR FORCES
AND NOT WAIT A SINGLE DAY
AIN'T THAT A BITCH?
TAX THE RICH

MS. NEILSEN

WITH ROADS ACROSS THE NATION
IN ROLLING DISREPAIR
AND DOCTORS BILLS OUT OF THIS WORLD
(taking a chair)

I THINK I NEED A CHAIR
THESE CUTS TO SOCIAL SERVICES
WE'D BETTER ALL BEWARE

MS. SIMON

AIN'T THAT A BITCH?
TAX THE RICH

MS. NEILSEN

AS COMPANIES MAKE KILLINGS
OUR PLANET DRIFTS ASTRAY
WHILE LOBBYISTS KEEP SHILLING
THE CORPORATION WAY
LET'S PUT OUR MINDS TOGETHER
AND FIND A BETTER WAY

MS. SIMON

AIN'T THAT A BITCH?
TAX THE RICH!

TEACHERS

THEY CLAIM THEY CAN'T AFFORD IT
THEY'D RATHER STEAL AND HOARD IT
LET'S OVERTHROW THE BASTARDS
AND SEND THEM ON THEIR WAY

THE TIME FOR TRUTH IS COMING
BEFORE WE TAKE A DRUBBING
LET'S GATHER UP OUR FORCES
AND NOT WAIT A SINGLE DAY

MS. SIMON

AIN'T THAT A BITCH?
TAX THE RICH

MR. DANIELS

IN HELL-HOLES LIKE AFGHANISTAN
IN KURDISTAN AND PAKISTAN
FROM SELMA DOWN TO BIRMINGHAM
THE MONEY'S STOPPED, IT'S ALL DRIED UP
THE ONLY PLACE TO LOOK IS UP
WHO'S THAT UP THERE WHO DOESN'T CARE
THE PUPPETEER, THE MASTER
JACK FELL DOWN AND BROKE HIS CROWN
AND JILL CAME TUMBLING AFTER

MS. SIMON

AIN'T THAT A BITCH?
TAX THE RICH

MR. JOHNSON, MR. DUGAN, MS. SIMON

SCHOOLS

MR. DANIELS, MR. ALBERT, MS. NEILSEN

POOLS

MR. JOHNSON, MR. DUGAN, MS. SIMON

SCHOOLS

MR. DANIELS, MR. ALBERT, MS. NEILSEN

POOLS

MR. JOHNSON, MR. DUGAN, MS. SIMON

SCHOOLS

MR. DANIELS, MR. ALBERT, MS. NEILSEN

POOLS

MR. JOHNSON, MR. DUGAN, MS. SIMON

SCHOOLS

ALL TEACHERS

FOOLS!

ALL TEACHERS (Continued)

THEY CLAIM THEY CAN'T AFFORD IT
THEY'D RATHER STEAL AND HOARD IT
LET'S OVERTHROW THE BASTARDS
AND SEND THEM ON THEIR WAY

THE TIME FOR TRUTH IS COMING
BEFORE WE TAKE A DRUBBING
LET'S GATHER UP OUR FORCES
AND NOT WAIT A SINGLE DAY
AIN'T THAT A BITCH?

(one grand shout)

TAX THE RICH!

The Last Days of Roosevelt Junior High

Preparations are made for the end of term party. On that day, Mr. Johnson announces to his class that all have passed and all will be promoted. As a great celebration sweeps the classroom and the party begins, the festive mood is once again abruptly shattered as enter the School Principal followed by members of the School Board and the teachers. Mr. White tells Mr. Johnson that due budget cuts and political realities, Roosevelt Junior High is to be closed at the end of the semester permanently. These are the last days of Roosevelt Junior High.

(Everyone is stunned as word is received that the school is to be closed. A sad but often too true ending, it's like Anatevka all over again. Thank you for listening. Please donate. H.H.)

Preceding Dialogue

VUONG ANH

Well, at least we have our memories.

MR. JOHNSON

(walking towards VUONG ANH)

That we do, Vuong Anh. That we do. They may be able to take away our school, but they'll never be able to take away all that's been accomplished here.

NGUYEN TRAN

That's true, teacher, but one thing's for sure, these are the last days of Roosevelt Junior High.

MR. JOHNSON nods sadly in agreement.

NGUYEN TRAN begins to sing.

(up music: The Last Days of Roosevelt Jr. High)

NGUYEN TRAN (Continued)

THE SHADOWS ARE REVEALING
THE SUN IS SINKING LOW
I'VE GOT AN EMPTY FEELING
I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO

SOPANNY

THE WORLD IS SPINNING MADLY
IT DRIFTS THROUGH OUTER SPACE
AND I FEEL SO SMALL
ONLY TWO FEET TALL
CAN I FIND A HIDING PLACE?

VUONG ANH

BUT THE SUN STILL SHINES
AND BABIES CRY
AND NEIGHBORS LEND A HAND
AND EAGLES SCREECH
THEY ALMOST PREACH
THEY SAY, "GET IT WHILE YOU CAN
THIS LAND IS EVERYBODY'S LAND"

The STUDENTS join their classmates.

STUDENTS

FOR THESE ARE THE LAST DAYS
OF ROOSEVELT JUNIOR HIGH
THESE ARE THE LAST DAYS
I KNOW WE'RE BOUND TO CRY
WE'LL THINK ABOUT THE LESSONS
AND ALWAYS WONDER WHY
THESE ARE THE LAST DAYS OF SCHOOL

*Enter the TEACHERS who stand
melancholy beside their old colleagues and
begin to sing.*

TEACHERS

FOR THESE ARE THE LAST DAYS
OF ROOSEVELT JUNIOR HIGH
MY FRIENDS WHO NOW BESIDE ME
WILL GO ON BY AND BY
WE ALWAYS DID OUR BEST HERE
WE GAVE OUR COLLEGE TRY
THESE ARE THE LAST DAYS OF SCHOOL

As the TEACHERS finish their tribute, MR. WHITE and MS. BEASLEY look fondly at each other. The tear-stained tissue still clutched in MS. BEASLEY's hand remains. Resignedly, THEY sing their own farewells.

MR. WHITE & MS. BEASLEY

FOR THESE ARE THE LAST DAYS
OF ROOSEVELT JUNIOR HIGH
THE END OF ENDLESS MEETINGS
FAREWELL TO SUITS AND TIES
THOSE BUREAUCRATIC SNAFUS
WILL SEEM LIKE PUMPKIN PIE
THESE ARE THE LAST DAYS OF SCHOOL

ALL join together for the final refrain.

ALL

FOR THESE ARE THE LAST DAYS
OF ROOSEVELT JUNIOR HIGH
THESE ARE THE LAST DAYS
I KNOW WE'RE BOUND TO CRY
WE'LL THINK ABOUT THE LESSONS
AND ALWAYS WONDER WHY
THESE ARE THE LAST DAYS OF SCHOOL
THESE ARE THE LAST DAYS OF SCHOOL

The room is quiet as many are teary-eyed,
overcome by the devastating news.

DEAR VIEWERS

**THANK YOU FOR READING AND LISTENING TO
"IN AMERICA"**

TOGETHER WE CAN GET THIS IMPORTANT NEW MUSICAL PRODUCED

BEST WISHES,

Hal Harper

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