

In America

an original screenplay by

Hal Harper

## Act I Scene I

Setting: Roosevelt Junior High School, a wing of the San Francisco Community College District, specializing in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to immigrants recently arrived in America.

*At Rise: In the background, we see the walls of Roosevelt Junior High School while in the foreground, five scenes unfold.*

*In one classroom, local SCHOOL BOARD members meet amid a crisis atmosphere that has been bought on by the State Accreditation Commission's threats to close down the school due to alleged fiscal mismanagement and growing anti-immigrant rhetoric.*

*In his office, the school Principal, MR. WHITE, an older, not surprisingly white-haired gentleman sits at his desk. HE is attended to by MS. BEASLEY, an older woman whose loyalty is rivaled only by her affection.*

*At the school's entrance stands THOMAS JOHNSON, a recent teaching graduate from New York City. A recent west coast arrival himself to the city of his dreams, San Francisco, he is on his fifth job interview as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and time is running out; it's get a job or go home a failure.*

*In Classroom 308, the STUDENTS sit patiently awaiting their new teacher.*

*In the school hallway, the THUG BOYS, a mean, callous bunch marked by their foul clothes and ill-manners loiter.*

*In the classroom where the SCHOOL BOARD is meeting, SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER WALTERS gets down to business.*

**SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER WALTERS**

Good morning, fellow School Board members. As you know, we are all here today to discuss the future and fate of this very school, Roosevelt Junior High, currently under review by the State Accreditation Commission whose never-ending mission it seems is to close us down due to groundless accusations of fiscal mismanagement.

**SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER LINDSAY**

That's ridiculous! This school's academic performance is exemplary. Seventy percent of its students transfer to state colleges and universities. At the same time, we provide excellent vocational programs in health, science, firefighting, EMT training and aircraft technology with most of our graduates getting jobs in those fields right here in the Bay Area.

**SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER PRIMROSE**

Of course we do. Why just a year ago, before the State Accreditation's Commission's report, we had over 110,000 students. Now we're down to 70,000. Students are going elsewhere and who can blame them? Why, they don't even know whether or not we'll even be here next year.

**SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER WALTERS**

No one does thanks to the State Accreditation Commission. You know, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Commission accuses the school of mismanagement and predicts its demise, the public hears that, stays away, and the prediction becomes "true."

*In MR. WHITE's office, the school Principal sorts through stacks of papers before selecting one.*

**MR. WHITE**

What's this Ms. Beasley?

**MS. BEASLEY**

That's the resume, Mr. White, from that new teacher candidate, Mr. Thomas Johnson, from New York who's here to interview for that new teaching position that just "opened up." It's nearly 9:00 o'clock. He should be here any minute.

**MR. WHITE**

Yes, it's too bad about Pendergrass. I guess he just couldn't take it anymore. Hell, the stress can get to anyone. I know it keeps me up at night wondering what's going to happen. Well, show him in when he arrives, Ms. Beasley. We really need to fill that position.

*In Room 308, the STUDENTS  
continue to await their new  
teacher.*

*ROSETTA, an attractive, young  
woman from Nicaragua speaks out.*

**ROSETTA**

I wonder what happened to our regular teacher, Mr. Pendergrass? He disappeared all of a sudden.

*JOSE, quick-witted from El  
Salvador, jokes.*

**JOSE**

In my country of El Salvador, that happens a lot.

*ROSETTA gasps.*

*RICO, a young man from Puerto  
Rico reassures her.*

**RICO**

I don't think he meant that kind of disappearance, Rosetta.

*ENRIQUE, an ascetic young farm worker from Mexico is unsure.*

**ENRIQUE**

Do you think those kinds of things could happen in America?

**JOSE**

Quien sabe? Who knows? It has happened to some of my friends and family. And you know, if the police stop you for anything, they can arrest you and then it's just like they say, you know, "Adios muchachos. All they will call you will be deportee."

*RICO laughs. ENRIQUE and ROSETTA are quiet.*

*SOPANNY, a small, wide-eyed figure from Laos is hopeful.*

**SOPANNY**

I hope Teacher teach us good English.

*MEI LI, a strikingly beautiful woman from China is optimistic.*

**MEI LI**

Oh, I'm sure he will.

*NGUYEN TRAN, a brash young man from Vietnam is skeptical.*

**NGUYEN TRAN**

How can you be so sure?

**MEI LI**

I don't know. I just am. I can feel it.

*VUONG ANH, an old man from Vietnam looks ahead.*

**VUONG ANH**

We will see.

*Outside the school, MR. JOHNSON attempts to calm himself before opening the front door.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Gee, I hope I get this job. I'm tired of sleeping on my friend's couch in his studio apartment in the Mission District. I mean, it's nice of him to let me stay there and all, but I can't live there forever. And rents are so expensive here, even more than in the Big Apple, if I don't land this job, I'll have to go back to New York a failure.

*Inside the TEACHERS ROOM, The TEACHERS prepare for classes.*

**MS. NEILSEN**

Isn't it a shame about Mr. Pendergrass? He was such a nice man.

**MR. DANIELS**

My G-d, Ms. Neilsen, you talk about him like he was dead. He just had a nervous breakdown. I mean, it does happen. How many have we lost that way?

**MR. ALBERT**

Well, he was ready to retire anyways, Mr. Daniels. I guess that's one way to leave.

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

Yeah, Mr. Albert, but what a way to go. The police said they found him in a coffee shop muttering over and over to himself, "Table, chair, cat, dog. Table, chair, cat, dog." Isn't that terrible?

**MS. NEILSEN**

That's what happens when you teach the lower levels for too long, Ms. Rodriguez. You know how it can get to you. You start talking to everyone like they're five years old.

**MR. DANIELS**

It's a hazard of the trade.

**MR. DUGAN**

Nobody ever said that teaching was easy. We do the best we can.

**MS. NEILSEN**

Well, I hope they find a good replacement for him.

**MR. DANIELS**

They'll be glad if they can find anyone right now. Kids today are staying away from the teaching profession in droves. They all want to go into the STEM fields instead of education because "that's where the money is."

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

Well, I'm sure the corporations love that. Get everyone to write code 'till it's so commonplace, you can pay them the same low wage as a grease monkey in an auto shop.

**MR ALBERTS**

Do you think it'll come to that?

**MR. DANIELS**

Some of those "grease monkeys" make better money than we do. Heck, they probably all do.

**MR. DUGAN**

Everyone makes more money than we do. We're teachers.

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

Give some of these politicians a chance, and before you know it, we'll all be teaching in charter schools and getting paid even less. Ain't that a bitch!

*The TEACHERS return to their work.*

*In the hallway, the THUG BOYS ridicule the STUDENTS passing by.*

**SPIKE**

Would youse (sic) look at them damned foreigners. All dressed up and going to school to learn English, just so's (sic) they can take jobs away from us real Americans. Where do they get off gettin' an education here, anyways? Hell, I was born here in this country and I ain't never got one, none that I can remember anyway... True, I ain't got a job neither but hah! Education! It's for suckers.

**SHADY**

Didn't need one, eh Spike? Yeah, me too.

**LARRY**

Me either.

**SHADY**

Youse neither?

**LARRY**

No, I went to school. I just remember one of my teachers hammering that lesson into our heads, that's all. She'd say, "positive plus positive equals too" and "negative plus negative equals either."

**SHADY**

What the - are you talking about? Say, are you one of them wise guys?

**LARRY**

No. I was just thinking.

**SPIKE**

Well, quit thinking. I'm the one (that)does the thinking around here, see. I got my education the hard way. With a two-by-four over the head courtesy of my old man.

**SHADY**

That ain't nothin'. My old man used to kick me in the head so hard, my face would turn blue, and my ma would have to haul him off of me. Sometimes she'd have to call the doctor, but just for advice on how to stop the bleeding.



**LARRY**

Why'd your old man do that?

**SHADY**

'Cause he felt like it, moron. Whydaya think? We couldn't really never actually go to the doctor, 'cause my ma didn't want no one to accidentally fink on the old man.

**SPIKE**

See. That's what I'm talking about. It's all them damn immigrants' fault.

**LARRY**

Howdaya figure, Spike?

**SPIKE**

Because, Brainless, if them damned foreigners wasn't using our American doctors for their own doctoring in the first place, us real Americans could get a doctor whenever we needed one. It's as plain as the dumb nose on your face.

**LARRY**

Gee, I never thought about it like that before.

**SPIKE**

That's why I'm the brains of the outfit, stupid, and you're just a moron. I told you before, all the education you'll ever need, you'll get from me, see?

**LARRY**

Yeah, Spike. I see.

*The TEACHERS see the subject of  
education in a different light.*

*(up music: Education)*

**SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER LINDSEY**

WHAT ORCHESTRATES CREATION  
SPARKS THE MIND'S IMAGINATION  
CREATES PATHS FOR TRANSFORMATION  
BY DEGREE

**MR. JOHNSON**

WHAT STIMULATES ONE'S KNOWLEDGE  
BLAZES TRAILS PERHAPS TO COLLEGE  
ITS TRUTHS IF STUDIED WELL  
CAN MAKE YOU FREE

**MR. DANIELS**

IT IS THAT GRAND VOCATION  
WHERE HARD WORK AND DEDICATION  
MAY WIN YOU ACCOLATION  
BY AND BY

**MR. DUGAN**

IT'S A LIFE OF INSPIRATION  
CONTEMPLATION, RUMINATION  
THAT MAY LEAD TO GRADUATION  
IF YOU TRY

**SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER WALTERS**

WHAT IS THIS REVELATION  
WHICH DEMANDS NO DECLARATION  
BUT IS CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION?  
EDUCATION!

**ALL**

OH EDUCATION  
EDUCATION  
YES, EDUCATION IS THE BACKBONE OF THE NATION  
IT CAN FREE YOUR SOUL AND BRING YOU LIBERATION  
EDUCATION, YES, EDUCATION, EDUCATION

**SPIKE**

MY FATHER BEAT ME MERCILESSLY  
HE TAUGHT ME HOW TO DO IT  
MY MOTHER NEVER READ OR WROTE  
THIS EDUCATION SCREW IT

**MR. WHITE**

AS YOU WIND YOUR WAY THROUGH LIFE

**MS. BEASLEY**

IT MAY HELP YOU WIN A WIFE

**SPIKE**

MAYBE EVEN THROW A KNIFE  
EDUCATION

**SCHOOL BOARD**

IT'LL HELP TO WIN YOU FRIENDS  
IT'S THE FUN THAT NEVER ENDS

**MR. JOHNSON**

IT MAY BRING YOU DIVIDENDS  
EDUCATION

**ALL**

OH EDUCATION  
EDUCATION  
YES, EDUCATION IS THE BACKBONE OF THE NATION  
IT CAN FREE YOUR SOUL AND BRING YOU LIBERATION  
OH EDUCATION, YES, EDUCATION, EDUCATION

**TEACHERS, SCHOOL BOARD**

WE RESPECT IT

**THUG BOYS**

WE REJECT IT

**TEACHERS, SCHOOL BOARD**

WE EXPECT IT  
TO HELP US TO SEND THEM ON THEIR WAY

**STUDENTS**

WE IMPLORE IT

**THUG BOYS**

WE IGNORE IT

**TEACHERS, SCHOOL BOARD**

WE MOST HEAR-TI-LY ENDORSE IT

**MR. WHITE AND MS. BEASLEY**

WE JUST HOPE THEY'LL LEARN TO READ SOMEDAY  
IT BEFITS ADMINISTRATION

**SCHOOL BOARD**

TO MAINTAIN ACCREDITATION

**THUG BOYS**

IT JUST SERVES THE CORPORATION  
IT'S A RACKET

**TEACHERS**

IT DEMANDS ONE'S GREAT ATTENTION

**STUDENTS**

TO ATTAIN ASSIMILATION

**THUG BOYS**

IT'S JUST PURE INDOCTRINATION  
WE CAN'T HACK IT

**ALL**

OH EDUCATION  
EDUCATION  
YES, EDUCATION IS THE BACKBONE OF THE NATION  
IT CAN FREE YOUR SOUL AND BRING YOU LIBERATION  
OH EDUCATION, YES, EDUCATION, EDUCATION  
(spoken)  
WE GO FORTH NO RESERVATION!  
ONWARD NOW A CELEBRATION!  
RALLY ROUND THE POPULATION!  
EDUCATION!

*The song ends. All but MR. WHITE  
and MS. BEASLEY remain. As the  
set widens, MR. WHITE'S OFFICE  
reveals a school poster that  
reads, "Everybody is Somebody at  
Roosevelt Junior High."*

*As MR. WHITE reviews MR.  
JOHNSON's resume, MS. BEASLEY  
announces the young candidate.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

Mr. White, that teaching candidate for the new position, Mr. Johnson, from New York City, is here to see you.

**MR. WHITE**

Yes, thank you. Send him in, please, Ms. Beasley.

**MS. BEASLEY**

Right away, Mr. White. Anything for you.

*SHE offers a cheesy smile to MR. WHITE who clears his throat uncomfortably before exiting to the adjoining waiting room where a nervous MR. JOHNSON awaits.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

Good morning, Mr. Johnson. We've been expecting you.

*MR. JOHNSON wipes his brow but says nothing.*

**MS. BEASLEY (continued)**

What's the matter, Mr. Johnson? Butterflies in your stomach?

**MR. JOHNSON**

No, thanks, I've got some already, thank you.

**MS. BEASLEY**

Hmmm... This way.

*THEY enter Mr. White's office.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

Mr. White. This is Mr. Johnson. He's here to interview for the new ESL teaching position that just "opened up."

*MR. WHITE stands.*

**MR. WHITE**

Ah yes, ESL, English as a Second Language for our newcomer students. That's fine. Mr. Johnson. It's nice to meet you. I was just going over your resume. Says here you went to NYU. I'm a Cal man myself. Play any sports there?

**MR. JOHNSON**

Just a little basketball, sir, at the Harlem YMCA on 135<sup>th</sup> Street.

**MR. WHITE**

Basketball's a fine game. I ran track. Did the quarter mile in a minute five. Also, a member of the varsity swim team.

*MS. BEASLEY feels MR. WHITE'S muscles.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

Yes. That's why he's in such good shape for a man his age.

**MR. WHITE**

That'll do, Ms. Beasley. Yes, sir, went in the army, got out, taught sports in the district for twenty-five years. Then they made me a principal. Imagine me! A school principal. Never heard of such a thing. But I guess they figured an ex-military man and sports teacher make for a good leader and who was I to argue? I was happy to get the job. Now I've been with the district for over forty years, seen its ups and downs, highs and lows, hills and dales, all that, you know, but I'll tell you, what we're facing now is unlike anything I've ever seen in all my years. The money's just not there anymore. Some insiders say it all dried up during the "Reagan Revolution" when all the homeowners' taxes were cut while some of the kids today are saying it's all because of the "top 1 percent." I don't know about that. That's above my pay grade and besides, I've got a school to run. Now you're here to interview for a teaching position, so what say we get down to brass tacks?

**MR. JOHNSON**

Yes, sir, Mr. White.

*(up music: The Interview Song)*

**MR. WHITE**

WELL, MR. JOHNSON  
HOW DO YOU DO?  
HOW DO YOU PLAN TO IMPRESS US  
AT THIS INTERVIEW?

**MR. WHITE (Continued)**

SPEAK MR. JOHNSON  
HOW DO YOU FEEL?  
GIVE US YOUR ALL RIGHT NOW

*(blunt)*

Well, Mr. Johnson?

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(meekly)*

Mr. White.

I AM SO EXCITED LATELY  
I WOULD LIKE THIS JOB SO GREATLY

*MS. BEASLEY exposes a bare leg  
to MR. WHITE.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

DO YOU THINK MY LEGS ARE SHAPELY?

*MR. WHITE buries his head in his  
hands.*

**MR. WHITE**

NOO NOO NOO  
MS. BEASLEY THAT WILL DO!

*MS. BEASLEY retreats.*

**MR. WHITE (Continued)**

SO, MR. JOHNSON  
WHERE DO YOU HAIL FROM?  
ARE YOU A HEARTY LAD  
OR ARE YOU A BUM?  
WELL, MR. JOHNSON  
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE  
AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

*(blunt)*

Well, Mr. Johnson?

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(meekly)*

I COME FROM MANHATTAN ISLAND

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

WHERE THE DAYS ARE NEVER BORING

*MS. BEASLEY comes out of hiding.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

WOULD WE EVER FIND YOU SNORING  
IN THE BRONX ZOO?

**MR. WHITE**

Noo Noo Noo

*(tossing a pencil in the air)*

Whoop Ti Do

*(bellowing)*

Ms. Beasley, that will do!

*MS. BEASLEY retreats once again.  
MR. JOHNSON attempts to calm his  
would-be employer by offering  
him his most heartfelt feelings  
as to why HE wants to become an  
ESL teacher. A skeptical MR.  
WHITE listens.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

IT IS MY HOPE TO TEACH A CLASS IN ESL

**MR. WHITE**

Oh, is it?

**MR. JOHNSON**

IT IS MY HOPE TO DO IT VERY WELL

**MR. WHITE**

I would expect so.

**MR. JOHNSON**

SO MANY YEARS  
I'VE STUDIED HARD TO BE  
AT A PLACE LIKE HERE  
MANY YEARS  
AND NOW I'M HERE



*MR. WHITE looks at the resume  
again.*

**MR. WHITE**

Hmm.

WELL, MR. JOHNSON  
IT SEEMS YOU WENT TO SCHOOL  
LOOKING AT THIS RESUME  
I SEE YOU ARE NO FOOL

*MR. WHITE plops MR. JOHNSON onto  
a chair.*

**MR. WHITE (Continued)**

SIT RIGHT DOWN AND LISTEN  
TO THE NECESSARY RULES  
YOU'LL NEED IN ORDER TO SUCCEED  
NOW MOST IMPORTANT IS PUNCTUALITY  
FOR WITHOUT PUNCTUALITY  
CLASSES SIMPLY CANNOT START ON TIME  
AND SECONDLY IS CLASS RATIONALITY  
FOR WITHOUT RATIONALITY  
THERE IS NO SENSE OF REASON NOR RHYME

*MS. BEASLEY steps forward.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

AND THIRDLY IS ACCURACY  
AND ACCURACY MUST BE COMPULSORY  
FOR WITHOUT ABSOLUTE ACCURACY  
CLASS IS SO LESS SUBLIME  
AND THAT IS A WASTE OF TIME  
TO TALLY STUDENTS' ABSENCES  
THEIR PRESENCES, PERFORMANCES  
TO DEAL WITH THOSE DISTURBANCES  
THAT RISE FROM TIME TO TIME

**MR. WHITE & MS. BEASLEY**

MAKES CLASS FAR MORE SUBLIME

**MR. WHITE**

WELL, MR. JOHNSON  
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT?

**MR. WHITE (Continued)**

ARE YOU ABLE TO MEET THE GRADE  
OR MERELY PASS THE HAT?  
ARE YOU AWARE OF ALL THERE IS  
IN GOVERNING A SCHOOL  
OR MR. JOHNSON ARE YOU A FOOL?

**MR. JOHNSON**

Oh no, Mr. White.

OH, I AM SURE THAT I CAN RISE  
AND EVEN YOU I WILL SURPRISE  
PLEASE DO NOT LOOK WITH NARROW EYES  
I'M SURE YOU WILL AGREE  
THAT YOU WERE ONCE LIKE ME

IT'S NOT EASY TO START AT THE TOP  
WHEN YOU'RE DOWN AT THE BOTTOM  
AND I KNOW YOU CAN GIVE ME THE CHOP  
WHEN YOU'VE THE CARDS  
AND I KNOW YOU'VE GOT 'EM  
BUT PLEASE MR. WHITE  
BE NICE AND REMEMBER  
WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG  
AND LIFE WAS SEPTEMBER  
AND PLEASE MR. WHITE  
PLEASE GRANT ME IF YOU WOULD  
THIS ONE FIRST CHANCE TO DO GOOD

**MR. WHITE**

*(to MS. BEASLEY)*

Hmm. Well, Ms. Beasley, what do you think about this boy?

*MS. BEASLEY appraises MR.  
JOHNSON again.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

Well...

HE'S BRIGHT AND MATURE  
AND HE'LL GO FAR  
AND IF I SMOKED  
I'D OFFER HIM A CIGAR  
HE'S CLEAN AS A WHISTLE

**MS. BEASLEY (Continued)**

AND NOT PART OF A MOB  
AND SINCE WE'RE DESPERATE I'D SAY

**MR. WHITE AND MS. BEASLEY**

MR. JOHNSON YOU'VE GOT THE JOB TODAY!

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(hardly believing his ears)*

I have? That's wonderful! ... I've got the job?

**MR. WHITE**

Yes, you have... if you want it.

**MR. JOHNSON**

If I want it? Gosh, Mr. White, you don't know how much I want it. Heck, I thought I was going to have to go back to New York and freeze my a... aunt fanny off there as usual next winter. Now, I can be socked in here by fog in beautiful San Francisco instead!

**MR. WHITE**

It's the good old Bay Area's micro-climates. There's nothing quite like it in the world.

*HE extends his hand to MR.  
JOHNSON.*

**MR. WHITE (Continued)**

It just so happens one of our regular teachers, Mr. Pendergrass, took "ill" this morning and will have to be out for at least the entire semester. We need a replacement teacher right away and it looks like you're it. Welcome aboard, Mr. Johnson.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Thank you, Mr. White.

*MR. WHITE walks over to his desk  
and rustles through some papers.  
A class assignment form is found  
and handed to MR. JOHNSON.*

**MR. WHITE**

Now then, Mr. Johnson. You'll be teaching an intermediate ESL class. You know the level. They've got the rudiments of English down. They just need to build on the basics.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Yes, sir.

**MR. WHITE**

Your class will be in room 308. If you have any questions, please feel free to call on myself, Ms. Beasley or any other members of the staff. We'll be happy to assist you in any way that we can.

*MR. WHITE looks at his watch.*

**MR. WHITE (Continued)**

Hmm. It looks like class is about to start. You'll just have time to get to the Teacher's Room to meet your new colleagues and get prepared. Ms. Beasley will show you the way.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Thank you, sir.

**MS. BEASLEY**

Right this way, Mr. Johnson.

*MS. BEASLEY holds open the door for MR. JOHNSON while discretely exchanging the "A-OK" sign with MR. WHITE before exiting.*

ACT I Scene II

Setting: The School Hallway

*At Rise: STUDENTS chatter in myriad languages as THEY make their way to class.*

*MS. BEASLEY shows MR. JOHNSON to a door whose sign reads, "Teachers' Room."*

**MS. BEASLEY**

Right this way, Mr. Johnson. This is the "Teachers' Room."

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(awed)*

Gosh. The "Teachers' Room."

*MS. BEASLEY opens the door. Inside the TEACHERS are preparing for class around a long, wooden table. MS. NEILSEN with flowery bonnet on her head is diligently running off copies of classroom assignments on the school copy machine while waiting her turn in line is loud but proud MS. RODRIGUEZ, who though short in stature stands tall in her tight denim jeans and matching vest. SHE and MS. NEILSEN are chatting.*

*Across the room sorting through texts at the large, wooden bookshelf towers BILL DUGAN. A mountain of a man, his enormous features cannot conceal his professorial qualities.*

*In the center of the room at one end of the long teacher's table sits MR. DANIELS. Crisp and trim, HE is looking through his briefcase at a precise, pernickety rate.*

*At the other end of the table is MR. ALBERT. A portly man with huge jowls and handlebar moustache. HE sits alone with coffee, donuts and newspaper.*

*The TEACHERS do not notice that MS. BEASLEY and MR. JOHNSON have entered. MS. BEASLEY clears her throat to announce MR. JOHNSON. The TEACHERS continue on with what they are doing. MS. BEASLEY clears her throat again. This time the TEACHERS come to attention.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

*(perfunctory)*

Teachers. I'd like you to meet our new teacher, Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson will be taking over Mr. Pendergrass's classes, who due to "personal reasons" will not be with us this semester.

**MR. DANIELS**

You mean he had a nervous breakdown.

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

The worst kind.

*THE TEACHERS snicker.*

**MR. DANIELS**

*(sighs)*

It's a wonder we don't all have a nervous breakdown at one time or another.

*The TEACHERS murmur in agreement.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

I trust everyone will assist Mr. Johnson in familiarizing himself with the rules and regulations of our school.

*The TEACHERS stare blankly.*

**MS. BEASLEY (Continued)**

And now, if everyone would join me in extending Mr. Johnson a rousing welcome to Roosevelt Junior High.

*The TEACHERS respond unenthusiastically.*

**TEACHERS**

Welcome.

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(awkward)*

Thank you.

*MS. BEASLEY turns to Mr. Johnson.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

Now, Mr. Johnson, you're in good hands. (indicating MR. DUGAN) Mr. Dugan here will show you the textbooks you'll be using. I'll be back before the bell rings.

*MR. JOHNSON nods anxiously as MS. BEASLEY exits. HE looks up a bit dumbfounded at his newfound colleagues before speaking.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(awkward)*

It's very nice to meet you all.

*A strained silence follows cut mercifully short by MR. DUGAN who hands a textbook to his new colleague.*

**MR. DUGAN**

Hi, I'm Bill Dugan. You can call me Bill. This is the textbook you'll be using in your class.

*MR. JOHNSON gratefully accepts the book.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Thank you.

*(looks at the title)*

Hmm. "In America." How interesting.

**MR. DUGAN**

*(matter-of-fact)*

They're all the same really. In every chapter, in addition to a grammar point and vocabulary list, there's a real-life situation that the students will most likely encounter. You know, like taking the bus, making a doctor's appointment, filling out a job application...

*MR. ALBERT peers up from his newspaper.*

**MR. ALBERT**

Fat chance of that happening.

*MR. DANIELS slams down his briefcase.*

**MR. DANIELS**

*(indignant)*

Well, you would know and maybe not at the beginning levels where you teach, Mr. Albert, but you can bet that my students are getting ready for the real world, and that includes learning how to fill out a job application!

*Murmurs of agreement from the other teachers. MR. ALBERT shrugs and returns to his newspaper.*



*MR. JOHNSON offers up a hopefully more benign topic of conversation.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(to MR. DUGAN)*

I was wondering... Mr. Dugan..., why is it that they call this school Roosevelt Jr. High School if it's really part of the community college system?

*Before HE can respond, MS. NEILSEN barges in.*

**MS. NEILSEN**

That's because, Mr. Johnson, for seventy-five years, this used to be a Junior High School, but when the demographics of the city changed, the school was closed. In the mid-1970's, however, when a new wave of immigrants came to the United States after the end of the Vietnam War, this neighborhood was revitalized, and the school was reopened, this time as an Adult School teaching English as a Second Language, or ESL, to newcomers from around the world. And although now an Adult School, the Board of Education voted to keep the original name of the school, Roosevelt Junior High, and so... the name has never changed.

*MS. NEILSEN is clearly pleased with her brilliant account of the school's history. MR. DUGAN can only concur.*

**MR. DUGAN**

That's... right... Ms. Neilsen.

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

Like they had a choice. The City Council insisted that the Board of Ed keep the name.

**MR. DANIELS**

Nostalgia, you know.

**MR. ALBERT**

Yes, nostalgia. But what were they thinking? I mean you have to agree. It is a funny name for an Adult School, Roosevelt Junior High.

**MS. NEILSEN**

I don't know. I kind of like it. It reminds me of when I was in junior high school.

**MR. ALBERT**

Now that must have been a long time ago, eh, Ms. Neilsen?

**MS. NEILSEN**

Indeed it was, Mr. Albert. Long enough to remember what a gentleman is and how he should act.

*MR. ALBERT bristles at this remark and returns to his newspaper. MR. JOHNSON, who has been hoping to avoid such local politics on his own first day at work says nothing. HE soon finds himself the topic of scrutiny though as MR. DANIELS steers the conversation his way.*

**MR. DANIELS**

So tell us, Mr. Johnson. How is it that you decided to teach English as a Second Language?

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(thinking)*

Well... you know, my grandmother taught English to displaced persons or "DPs" as she said they called them, the refugees from Europe after World War II, and she said it was a life-changing experience. The story always fascinated me, so I chose teaching ESL as my major in college.

*The TEACHERS offer no comment to this account and MR. JOHNSON's exuberance soon fades away.*

*Uncomfortable with the silence, HE turns the question around.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Well, if I may ask the same question: Why is it that all of you have chosen to teach ESL, and how is it that you have been able to keep up with your lessons for so many years?

*(up music: To Help Others On  
Their Way)*

**TEACHERS**

IT'S WHAT WE DO  
IT'S OUR REASON D'ETRE  
IT'S OUR PURPOSE FOR BEING HERE  
TO HELP OTHERS ON THEIR WAY

IT'S OUR LIFE'S WORK  
IT BRINGS US OUR MONTHLY PAY  
IT'S WHAT WE SWEAT AND PRAY FOR  
TO HELP OTHERS ON THEIR WAY

TO HELP OTHERS ON THEIR WAY  
AS THEY SAILED ACROSS THE SEA  
LIKE SO MANY DID BEFORE THEM  
TO THIS LAND OF JUBILEE

TO HELP OTHERS ON THEIR WAY  
WHAT A LOVELY THOUGHT IT IS  
TO SPEND A LIFE JUST DOING THAT  
HELPING OTHERS ON THEIR WAY

AS OUR FOREFATHERS CAME FROM PLYMOUTH ROCK  
AND OTHERS CAME FROM SPAIN  
WHILE OTHERS MADE THE JOURNEY HERE  
WRACKED IN SLAVERY'S CHAINS

THE NEW WORLD WAS FORBIDDING  
WITH ITS SUDDEN WEALTH AND GAIN  
BUT SOON THEY GOT THEIR FOOTING  
AS OTHERS HELPED THEM ON THEIR WAY  
AND WE DO THE SAME TODAY

*The BELL RINGS and MS. BEASLEY  
re-enters the room handing out  
marching orders.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

Alright teachers. It's show time. Get your books, pencils and attendance sheets together. Have a great class, send any problems that might come up to Mr. White's office and don't forget to take the roll.

*The TEACHERS begin to file out.*

**MS. BEASLEY (Continued)**

And remember, no eating, drinking, gum chewing or cell phones in the classrooms.

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

*(exits muttering)*

Yeah, yeah, and all that jazz.

*MS. BEASLEY turns to MR. JOHNSON to hand him his attendance sheet.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

Mr. Johnson, here is your attendance sheet. (kindly) Break a leg.

*HE takes the attendance sheet from MS. BEASLEY.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Thank you.

**MR. ALBERT**

Yes, good luck, Mr. Johnson. You'll need it. Out of the frying pan and into the fire, I always say.

*MR. JOHNSON is bit shaken by this remark and as HE exits the Teacher's Room, HE approaches his first day of class as a teacher, terrified.*

## ACT I Scene III

Setting: The School Hallway

*At Rise: There is a great buzz as STUDENTS and TEACHERS make their way to class.*

*Lurking in the hallway, the THUG BOYS watch and wait.*

*As the final BELL RINGS, MR. JOHNSON stumbles through the hall clutching his attendance sheet. His first teaching assignment, so long sought after and at last achieved now seems an impossible task.*

*Spying the rookie teacher, the THUG BOYS mock his angst.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Oh me oh my. What shall I say? Can I do this job today?

*(up music: Teacher Panic)*

**MR. JOHNSON**

THE BELL'S ALREADY RUNG  
THE CLASS HAS JUST BEGUN  
IS THERE A PLACE TO RUN?  
OH CAN THIS JOB BE DONE?

IT'S SO CLEAR  
IT IS SO SCARY  
HOW CAN ONE JOB  
BE SO HAIRY AND NIGH?

COULD I HAVE BEEN MISTAKEN?  
SHOULD I THIS JOB HAVE TAKEN?  
MIGHT I HAVE MOVED TOO FAST?  
CAN I STAY IN THE PAST?

ALL THE WALLS  
THEY SEEM SO CLOSE IN  
MAYBE I'LL JUST BE  
A MOSEYING ALONG

**THUG BOYS**

TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC  
TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC  
TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC  
TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC

TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC  
TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC

TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC  
TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC  
TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC  
TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC

TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC  
TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC

**MR. JOHNSON**

FOR FOUR LONG YEARS I'VE STUDIED HARD TO PLEASE  
BUT NOW I FEEL A TREMBLING IN MY KNEES  
AND SO I WONDER IF I CAN THE DANCE  
OH WELL, MAYBE I'LL JUST MOVE TO FRANCE

*MR. JOHNSON approaches the  
classroom door. The Room Number  
308 hangs ominously.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

BEFORE ME COMES THE DOOR  
THAT I'VE NOT SEEN BEFORE  
OH WILL I MAKE THE GRADE?  
WHEN I WALK ON THE STAGE?

**THUG BOYS**

TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC  
TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC  
TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC  
TEACHER PANIC TEACHER PANIC

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

ALL THE WORLD IT SEEMS SO LARGE  
WHY DO I FEEL NOW I CAN'T TAKE CHARGE  
WHERE CAN I CATCH AN OUTBOUND BARGE AWAY  
BUT LIKE THEY SAID,  
"MR. JOHNSON YOU'VE GOT THE JOB TODAY!"

*As the THUG BOYS exit, a great  
sense of resolve sweeps over MR.  
JOHNSON who summoning up all of  
his courage, slowly opens the  
classroom door that will lead  
him to his destiny.*

ACT I Scene IV

Setting: Room 308

*At Rise: Immigrant STUDENTS from around the world sit expectantly at their desks as MR. JOHNSON enters.*

*MR. JOHNSON steps up to the lectern to greet his STUDENTS.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Good morning class.

**STUDENTS**

*(in unison)*

Good morning, teacher.

*MR. JOHNSON writes his name on the blackboard.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

My name is... Thomas Johnson.

*HE turns to the class.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

It's very nice to meet you.

**STUDENTS**

*(in unison)*

It's very nice to meet you, too.

*MR. JOHNSON is a bit startled by this second chorale response.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Well, now then students, since we're all new here today... (at least I know I am), I thought it might be nice for us to get to

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

know each other a bit. You know, who you are, where you're from, what you hope to achieve in class... anything, anything at all.

*The STUDENTS sit silent.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Well, maybe I should start. My name is Thomas Johnson. I'm from Manhattan, New York. My father is a doctor and my mother is an author of children's books. My hobbies are film and travel and I'm looking forward to working with all of you here this semester. Now how about you?

*The STUDENTS remain silent. MR. JOHNSON is perplexed.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Anyone? (no response) Surely there must be somebody who has something they'd like to share with the class.

*The STUDENTS remain silent.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

*(slightly desperate)*

Anyone? Anything?

*One beautiful, young Chinese woman, MEI LI, rises slowly from her desk in response to MR. JOHNSON's plea.*

**MEI LI**

Do not despair, teacher. We will tell you.

*(up music: Student Introduction Song)*



**STUDENTS**

DEAREST TEACHER  
WE WILL TELL YOU  
OF US WHAT WE CAN  
WE ARE WITNESS  
THE SLAUGHTER  
THAT PERVADES ALL MAN

WE WERE AFRAID  
OH YES, WE WERE AFRAID  
WE BEAR SILENT  
TESTIMONY  
TO THE FALLING REIGN  
FORGIVE THEM  
THEIR FAILINGS  
THOUGH WE BEAR THE PAIN  
WE WERE AFRAID  
OH YES, WE WERE AFRAID

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(relieved)*

I see. Well, now class, let's hear some stories.

*HE points to a group of LATIN  
STUDENTS, RICO, ROSETTA, JOSE and  
ENRIQUE.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Why don't we start here?

**LATIN STUDENTS**

WE CAME FROM SOUTH OF THE BORDER  
WHERE THE SOLDIERS DESTROYED LAW AND ORDER  
WITH MACHETES THEY DREW IN THE AIR  
SO WE FOUGHT AND DRAGGED OURSELVES HERE  
AI YAI YAI YAI  
YAI YAI YAI  
OLE

*MR. JOHNSON points to RICO.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

How about you, young man?

*RICO steps forward to the clicking of castanets.*

**RICO**

MY NAME IS RICO  
I COME FROM PUERTO RICO  
MY LIFE IS SPICY  
LIKE THE SWEAT UPON MY BROW

*RICO takes ROSETTA by the hand to introduce her.*

**RICO (Continued)**

THIS IS ROSETTA  
SHE COMES FROM NICARAGUA  
SHE DANCES PRETTY  
WHEN THE LIGHTS GO DOWN

*ROSETTA struts brazenly across the classroom floor before halting tantalizingly close to MR. JOHNSON.*

**ROSETTA**

I AM ROSETTA  
I COME FROM NICARAGUA  
YES, I DANCE PRETTY  
WHEN THE LIGHTS GO DOWN  
I'D LIKE TO SHOW YOU  
A NICARAGUAN MAMBO  
IT'S THE HOTTEST DANCE  
IN MY COUNTRY THIS YEAR

*ROSETTA dances and the other LATIN STUDENTS join in. When they finish, MR. JOHNSON calls to one of the students.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

You, sir. What is your name?

*JOSE flashes the thumbs-up sign.*

**JOSE**

My name is Jose.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Jose... And where are you from?

**JOSE**

I'm from El Salvador.

**MR. JOHNSON**

El Salvador. I see. Well now, tell me Jose. Why did you come to this country? What's your story?

**JOSE**

Mi historia? My story? Well, I'll tell you.

*(up music)*

**LATIN STUDENTS**

WELL THE GUNS IN THE TOWN  
THEY WERE SOON ALL AROUND  
THERE WAS SCREAMING  
WHEN THE BAD SOLDIERS CAME  
AND THEY CHASED US AGAIN  
IN THE EVENING

SO WE GOT OUT OF THERE  
AND WE MADE OUR WAY HERE  
TO EL NORTE  
WHERE THE MOON AND THE STARS  
AND THE WOMEN AND CARS  
ARE SO SPORTY

**ALL STUDENTS**

WE WERE AFRAID  
OH YES WE WERE AFRAID  
WE WERE AFRAID  
OH YES WE WERE AFRAID

*The LATIN STUDENTS join ranks.*

**LATIN STUDENTS**

NOW WE CAME HERE TO LEARN  
 AND HOPEFULLY EARN SOME DINERO  
 AND WE WEAR OUR BERETS  
 AND PARADE LIKE A GAY DESPERADO  
 BUT WITHIN US NO LIE  
 WE ARE TREMBLING INSIDE  
 AUTOMATIC  
 WANNA FLAP LIKE A BIRD  
 'CUS WE CAN'T FIND THE WORDS  
 ONLY STATIC

**ALL STUDENTS**

WE'RE STILL AFRAID  
 OH YES, WE'RE STILL AFRAID  
 WE'RE STILL AFRAID  
 OH YES, WE'RE STILL AFRAID

**MR. JOHNSON**

Well, in this class there's no need to be afraid. In here, you are safe. I promise.

*The STUDENTS grow quiet at this pronouncement. The LATIN STUDENTS return to their seats. MR. JOHNSON surveys the classroom.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

What about some of the other students? What is your story? Tell me, please. I want to know you all.

*MEI LI, the beautiful young student who had previously risen to MR. JOHNSON's aid greets her teacher with an ancient Chinese melody.*

**MEI LI**

MY NAME IS MEI LI  
 I WANT YOU TO KNOW  
 I CAME FROM CHINA  
 ALMOST SEVEN WEEKS AGO  
 I AM SO EAGER TO DO SO WELL  
 MR. JOHNSON HOW DO YOU DO?

*MR. JOHNSON is touched by the young woman's genuine quality and smiles and nods at her as SHE resumes her seat.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

I'm fine, Mei Li. Thank you. *(moving on)* Alright. Anyone else?

*From one corner of the room, the RUSSIAN STUDENTS, LAVONNA, FANYA, JOSEF and VLADIMIR begin humming a traditional Russian melody. LAVONNA, middle-aged and weather-beaten steps forward.*

*(up Russian music)*

**LAVONNA**

MY NAME IS LAVONNA  
FROM THE UKRAINE I TELL YOU  
LIVING HERE IN AMERICA  
A DREAM THAT HAS COME TRUE  
I LOVE AMERICA  
IT'S A LAND WHERE YOU CAN DO  
ALL THAT FREEDOM WILL ALLOW  
A PLACE FOR ME AND YOU

*At this the RUSSIAN STUDENTS rise and begin to waltz to a delightful Russian folk melody. When finished, THEY return to their desks.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Thank you. That was very nice. *(beat as HE surveys the class)*  
What about from Vietnam? I know we have some students from Vietnam because I read the attendance sheet and saw I think two Vietnamese names on it. Now don't be shy. How about it? Does anyone have a story they'd like to share with the class?

*NGUYEN TRAN, a young Vietnamese-American youth with slicked back hair and shirt-tail hung fashionably loose slinks brashly to the middle of the floor.*

*Standing self-assured, HE eyes SOPANNY, the tiny, wide-eyed girl from Laos, dressed in a long, brightly multi-colored dress. Seeking to impress her, HE blasts forth an Elvis-inspired blues rendition of his life story.*

*(up early rock and roll music)*

**NGUYEN TRAN**

MY NAME IS NGUYEN TRAN  
FROM THE PLACE YOU ALL KNOW WEL  
I WAS SCRITCHING AND SCRATCHING  
JUST THIS SIDE OF HELL  
WHEN A NUMBER ONE JOE BOY  
(TURNED OUT HE WAS MY DADDY)  
FREED ME FROM THAT SMELL  
WHEN I WAS SMALL  
IN THE STREETS OF SAIGON I DID PLAY  
WHEN THE GI'S LEFT  
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY  
MY DADDY TOOK ME TO KENTUCKY  
(NOW THAT WAS COOL)  
THEN WE WOUND UP HERE  
IN SAN FRANCISCO BAY

**MR. JOHNSON**

Kentucky? You do seem to have a bit of a southern accent there, Tran.

**NGUYEN TRAN**

Yes, teacher. Tha' becau' I lived in Kentucky for two yea'.

**MR. JOHNSON**

I see. Well, it's very nice.

**NGUYEN TRAN**

Thank you, teacher.

*The STUDENTS all rise and sing.*

**STUDENTS**

NOW WE'RE HERE IN THIS LAND  
 WHERE WE CAN'T UNDERSTAND  
 WHAT THEY'RE SAYING  
 SO WE CAME TO THIS SCHOOL  
 TO GATHER THE TOOLS  
 TO SUCCEED WITH  
 NOW WE SEE YOU ARE HERE  
 IN THE SPOTLIGHT SO CLEAR  
 OF THIS CLASSROOM  
 AND WE WAIT FOR OUR TURN  
 AND HOPE WE CAN LEARN  
 FOR TOMORROW

*MR. JOHNSON offers a sympathetic  
 look to his STUDENTS as HE  
 passes among them.*

*Having come full-circle, ALL  
 sing the final refrain.*

**MR. JOHNSON & STUDENTS**

WE'RE NOT AFRAID  
 OH NO, WE'RE NOT AFRAID  
 WE'RE NOT AFRAID  
 OH NO, WE'RE NOT AFRAID  
 WE'RE NOT AFRAID  
 OH NO, WE'RE NOT AFRAID

*The STUDENTS and MR. JOHNSON  
 return to their places at both  
 the desks and lectern.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Well, class, it's very nice to meet you all. I look forward to getting to know you more as the semester proceeds. (*HE surveys the class.*) Now there were a few students who didn't get a chance to introduce themselves. Perhaps if they could do so now...

*HE points to SOPANNY.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

You miss, in the flowery dress, what is your name?

**SOPANNY**

Sopanny.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Sopanny. And where are you from, Sopanny?

**SOPANNY**

I'm from Laos. When I was small, I used to play with the rain.

**MR. JOHNSON**

That's a nice story, Sopanny. You know the US and Laos have a long history of friendship. Many of your Hmong and Mien tribespeople helped our soldiers during the Vietnam War. Thank you.

**SOPANNY**

Yes, my uncle was in that war.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Well, thank your uncle for his service, Sopanny.

**SOPANNY**

Thank you, teacher, but he was on the side of the Vietcong.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Oh! (pause) Well, you're welcome anyway.

*The STUDENTS laugh at this.  
SOPANNY smiles. MR. JOHNSON  
calls on a sweet, older Russian  
woman sitting beside LAVONNA.  
This is FANYA and SHE speaks in  
a thick, Russian accent.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

And you, ma'am, what is your name?

**FANYA**

My name Fanya.

**MR. JOHNSON**

I see. Your name is Fanya. And you must be from Russia.



**FANYA**

Da.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Yes. Well, it's very nice to meet you.

**FANYA**

It's very nice to meet you, too. I have good feeling about you. You will be good teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Well, thank you, Fanya. I hope so.

*FANYA smiles. Near her is a middle-aged Russian gentleman wearing a wool cap on his head. This is JOSEF. MR. JOHNSON calls on him.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

And you, sir. What is your name?

**JOSEF**

*(Russian accent)*

My name Josef.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Josef... And what brings you to class today, Josef?

**JOSEF**

*(shrugs)*

To tell you truth, I don't know. At home I was doctor. Here, I am nobody. Perhaps I will again be somebody if I study English... I don't know.

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(encouraging)*

Well, that's nonsense. Of course, you are somebody. "Everybody is Somebody at Roosevelt Junior High." (with mirth) I know because I read it on a school-made poster inside the principal's office waiting room just this morning.

*The STUDENTS laugh.*

**JOSEF**

*(giving in)*

Hokay. (sic) I am somebody... Let me just say I am lost somebody here.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Fair enough. Well, maybe we can help you become "found" somebody here this semester.

*The class laughs again. JOSEF shrugs.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

And the tall gentleman in the back sitting by the window?

**VLADIMIR**

*(with a voice like Dracula)*

I am Vladimir.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Vladimir. (checking the attendance sheet) Yes, hello, Vladimir. How are things in Transylvania?

**VLADIMIR**

*(puzzled)*

Excuse me?

*MR. JOHNSON dismisses his own ill-attempt at humor.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Oh, nothing... Well, welcome to the class, Vladimir.

*VLADIMIR nods deeply to MR. JOHNSON, still a bit confused by the teacher's reference.*

*MR. JOHNSON calls next on an older Vietnamese gentleman who has been sitting quietly next to NGUYEN TRAN. It is VUONG ANH.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

And you, sir. What is your name?

**VUONG ANH**

My name is Vuong Anh.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Vuong Anh? You must be the other student from Vietnam whose name I saw on the attendance sheet. Is that right?

**VUONG ANH**

Yes, teacher. I am Chinese-Vietnamese. I speak Chinese and Vietnamese... and a little English.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Well, that's impressive. As for me, I only speak one language... English. I wish I knew more.

*The STUDENTS laugh.*

**JOSE**

More English?

**MR. JOHNSON**

No, more languages in general, Jose. I only speak one language, English. You know the way it works. You students are here to learn this country's language and culture. When I go to your country, you can teach me your language and culture, but right now we're here in America, so...

*MR. JOHNSON searches the room.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

And one more student. You sir, what is your name?

*ENRIQUE answers softly.*

**ENRIQUE**

My name is Enrique.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Enrique. And where are you from?

**ENRIQUE**

I am from Mexico.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Really? What part of Mexico?

**ENRIQUE**

It is a small village in the state of Sonora in the Northwest of Mexico. My father and I used to pick fruit in the big orchards there but when the cartels started to become more powerful, we got caught in the middle of the drug wars, so we got out of there quick and made our way to Fresno, CA, where we picked fruit for a few seasons. Afterwards, when we found a cousin who lives here in San Francisco, we came here. We like it here. It's very peaceful.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Yes, San Francisco is nice, isn't it? Well, welcome, Enrique. Of course, many of our farmworkers come from Mexico. They've been coming here for years. In fact, you might even say they owned this land at one time. Come to think of it, they did!

*The students laugh.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

But enough of that. As for me, this is as you know, my first time teaching at Roosevelt Junior High. What you may not know is that this is my first-time teaching anywhere.

*The STUDENTS gasp. MR. JOHNSON goes to the blackboard.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Now as I said before, my name is...

*HE writes his name, "Thomas Johnson."*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

... Thomas Johnson. Now you can call me Thomas or Mr. Johnson, or perhaps this being an adult class... Tom. Whichever you prefer. Just please don't call me Tommy. My big sister used to

call me Tommy and well... let's just say, it's not my favorite name...

*The STUDENTS grow quiet and cast their eyes downward at this discourse.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

What's this? Is there some problem here? Now don't be shy.

*MEI LI raises her hand.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Yes, Mei Li.

**MEI LI**

Excuse me. But in our country we always call our teacher, "Teacher."

*ROSETTA quickly confirms this.*

**ROSETTA**

Si, in my country, too. We say "Teacher." It is a sign of respect.

*RICO pipes in.*

**RICO**

Yes, we too. It's the same in my country.

**LAVONNA**

So in mine, too.

**SOPANNY**

And in mine!

*The STUDENTS murmur in agreement. MR. JOHNSON considers the idea.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(to himself)*

Teacher. Teacher. (then aloud) Well, it is a little unusual in this country to call your teacher, "Teacher." But one thing about this class is that we're here not only to learn about the American language and culture, but everyone who's in the class, and I suppose that includes me as well, so....

*HE tries on the new moniker again.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Teacher... (then exuberant) Teacher! I like it!

*(proclaiming to the class)*

Alright then. Teacher it shall be!

*Everyone is pleased. The BELL rings.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Well, class. That's all the time we have for today.

*HE holds up the textbook, an ESL Reader, which like this musical is entitled, "In America" and opens it to the assigned pages.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Please read the first chapter in our new textbook, "In America," entitled, "Getting to Know You" and do the exercises that follow on pages 1-5. We'll review them next class.

*Some open their textbooks briefly to locate the exercises as THEY gather their items.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Any questions?

*The STUDENTS have none.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Any answers?

*The STUDENTS have none.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Well, I hope you'll have a few by the end of the semester. See you tomorrow, nice meeting you and don't forget to do your homework.

**STUDENTS**

*(in unison)*

Have a nice day, teacher.

*MR. JOHNSON takes his place at his desk as his STUDENTS gather up their belongings.*

**RICO**

See you tomorrow, teacher.

**ROSETTA**

*(flirty)*

Goodbye, teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Goodbye, Rico. Goodbye Rosetta.

**ROSETTA**

Habe (sic) a nice day.

**MR. JOHNSON**

You, too.

*The RUSSIAN STUDENTS approach next. LAVONNA speaks.*

**LAVONNA**

Thank you, Teacher. Goodbye.

**MR. JOHNSON**

You're welcome, Lavonna. Goodbye.

*FANYA, JOSEF and VLADIMIR nod  
and smile as THEY exit.*

*VUONG ANH, NGUYEN TRAN and  
SOPANNY approach.*

**VUONG ANH**

*(bowing lowly)*

Goodbye, Teacher. It is an honor to meet you.

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(bowing slightly in return)*

Well, it's very nice to meet you too, Vuong Anh.

**NGUYEN TRAN**

*(mischievous)*

Goodbye, Mr. Johnson. You number one, teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(chuckling)*

Well thank you, Tran. And you are number one student, too, I'm sure.

*THEY exit. Now all have left  
except MEI LI who has been  
standing quietly off to one side  
of the room. Slowly, SHE  
approaches.*

**MEI LI**

Goodbye, teacher. Thank you.

**MR. JOHNSON**

You're welcome, Mei Li. See you tomorrow?

**MEI LI**

Oh, yes.

**MR. JOHNSON**

That's fine. Don't forget to do your reading.



**MEI LI**

Yes, I will. I mean, I won't. Goodbye teacher.

*MEI LI runs out in a fluster.  
MR. JOHNSON finds her behavior  
somewhat odd but quickly  
dismisses as HE absent-mindedly  
picks up his ATTENDANCE SHEET.*

*Returning to his DESK. HE starts  
to reflect on the day's events,  
and especially his newly  
bestowed moniker.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

*(softly to himself)*

Teacher.

*HE speaks the word a bit louder,  
still getting used to it.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Teacher. They call me "Teacher."

*(up music: Song: They Call Me  
Teacher)*

WHO WOULD HAVE EVER THOUGHT  
THAT I COULD BE A SOMETHING?  
THERE WERE SO MANY TIMES  
I THOUGHT I'D BE A NOTHING  
BUT NOW I LOOK AROUND ME  
THERE'S A BRAND-NEW KIND OF CREATURE  
SHH! THEY CALL ME TEACHER

IT SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY  
THAT I WAS LOST IN WONDER  
A STORY WITHOUT AN END  
THAT I COULD ONLY PONDER  
BUT NOW THAT TALE IS OVER  
THERE'S A BRAND-NEW DOUBLE FEATURE  
SHH! THEY CALL ME TEACHER

CHOOSE THAT TEXT  
AND PLAN THE CLASSES

RUN THOSE COPIES  
WRITE THOSE PASSES  
GIVE THE HOMEWORK  
DON'T TAKE SASSES  
SHH! THEY CALL ME TEACHER

*The STUDENTS re-enter, college  
prep clothes and textbooks in  
hand, as if this is how they had  
imagined American schools might  
be.*

**STUDENTS**

WHO WOULD HAVE EVER THOUGHT  
THAT HE COULD BE A SOMETHING?  
THERE WERE SO MANY TIMES  
HE THOUGHT HE'D BE A NOTHING  
BUT NOW WE LOOK AROUND HIM

**MR. JOHNSON**

THERE'S A BRAND-NEW KIND OF CREATURE  
SHH! WE CALL HIM TEACHER

**VUONG ANH**

A BRAND-NEW CHANCE AT LIFE  
HOW CAN WE EVER THANK HIM?

**MEI LI**

I'D LIKE TO BE HIS WIFE

**NGUYEN TRAN**

THE THOUGHT IS TOO EXCITNING (sic)

**JOSE**

I DIG THAT CRAZY CHALK DUST  
IT'S BETTER THAN A REEFER

**STUDENTS**

SHH! WE CALL HIM TEACHER

**MR. JOHNSON**

OUT OF THE BOOKS AND INTO THE FIRE

THAT'S WHAT COMES FROM ALL THAT HIGHER LEARNING  
YEARS AND YEARS OF STUDY IT TOOK  
ALWAYS BURIED IN A BOOK AND YEARNING  
TO BE A TEACHER

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

TO BE A TEACHER  
NOW I'M A TEACHER

*The music continues and MR. JOHNSON surprises the STUDENTS with a few steps of his own. When it is over, THEY gather around their teacher as if to attend a lecture. Some of the STUDENTS begin to chatter.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

STUDENTS WAITING  
ALL ASSEMBLE  
HOPE MY CLASSES  
WON'T BE TOO DULL

*MR. JOHNSON points to the disruptive STUDENTS.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

TRY TO REACH HIM  
TRY TO REACH HER

*(shushes them.)*

SHH!

*The STUDENTS stop their chatter.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

THEY CALL ME TEACHER

*A blanket of fog sweeps the stage as MR. JOHNSON leaps up onto his desk.*

OUT OF THE FOG AND INTO THE LIGHT  
WALKING ON TOP AND DOING IT RIGHT AWAY  
PICKING UP TIME AND HAVING A BALL  
LOOKS LIKE WE CAN HAVE IT ALL TODAY

THEY CALL ME TEACHER

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

THEY CALL ME TEACHER  
THEY CALL ME...

*It is now the STUDENTS' turn to  
shush their over-exuberant  
teacher.*

**STUDENTS**

SHH!

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(whispered)*

TEACHER

ACT I

Scene V

Setting: In a nearby park, we see Roosevelt Junior High school in the background. Charming Victorian houses line the streets.

*At Rise: The STUDENTS are discussing the new teacher.*

**RICO**

What do you think of the new teacher, Rosetta?

**ROSETTA**

*(dreamily)*

I like him bery (sic) much. He's bery (sic) handsome.

*JOSE looks sideways at ROSETTA.*

**JOSE**

You think all the men are handsome, Rosetta.

**ROSETTA**

Oh, no. Only the handsome ones, (turning to Rico) eh, Rico?

*RICO brightens at this remark.*

**RICO**

You think I am handsome, Rosetta?

**ROSETTA**

Oh, (j)yes (sic) Rico. You are bery (sic) handsome, too.

*RICO smiles shyly. ROSETTA notices that ENRIQUE is unusually quiet and whispers to RICO.*

**ROSETTA**

Psst... Hey Rico, what's the matter with Enrique?

**RICO**

I don't know. (to Enrique) Hey, Enrique, que pasa?

**ENRIQUE**

Oh dios. I don't want to tell you. It's too bad. I am ashamed to say.

**ROSETTA**

Come on, Enrique. We are your friends. Tell us.

**JOSE**

Yeah, come on, homey. Tell us.

*ENRIQUE is hesitant but at last blurts out the news.*

**ENRIQUE**

It's my father. He was picked up last week by the local police because he was delivering a load of peaches in a truck with a broken tail light. The police called it into ICE who told them to hold him and now they are going to deport him as an illegal.

**ROSETTA**

But he's been here for years. How can they deport him for that?

**JOSE**

Maybe it's just because he's Mexican.

**RICO**

Hush up, Jose! You just have to be strong, Enrique. It can happen to any of us anytime. That's why we have to stay in the shadows.

*ROSETTA and JOSE nod their heads in agreement. ENRIQUE is silent. SOPANNY remains focused on her goal.*

**SOPANNY**

I hope teacher teach me better English.

**NGUYEN TRAN**

No problem. He number one teacher.

**LAVONNA**

*(nods to Fanya who returns the gesture)*

I think so, too.

**MEI LI**

He will. I'm sure of it.

**JOSE**

How you can be so sure?

**MEI LI**

I don't know. I just am.

**NGUYEN TRAN**

Well, whatever. I' for sure we need it. People sometime' break my ball when they don' understand my English.

**JOSEF**

Break your ball? What is that?

**NGUYEN TRAN**

Mean they give you very hard time. They say that a lot back in Kentucky.

**JOSEF**

*(thinking)*

Hmm. Maybe is like Russia. But in Russia they say, "We break your head."

*NGUYEN TRAN shrugs.*

**VUONG ANH**

*(humble)*

I cannot say about you, but I know that I am just grateful to be here.

*The OTHERS murmur in agreement.*

**LAVONNA**

Da. Here in America is freedom.

**FANYA**

Is democracy.

**ROSETTA**

Is many bery (sic) handsome men.

*The others look at ROSETTA as if she's a broken record. VUONG ANH begins to sing.*

*(up music: America America)*

**VUONG ANH**

AMERICA SO VERY BIG  
AMERICA SO GRAND  
AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL  
IT'S EVERYBODY'S LAND

I THOUGHT MY LIFE WAS FADING FAST  
WHEN I WAS IN MY COUNTRY  
SO MANY WARS THEY CAME AND WENT  
AND I WAS LEFT IN MISERY  
AND I WEPT

**NGUYEN TRAN**

FOR DAYS ON END

**VUONG ANH**

AND SOMETIMES I WOULD  
SEE THE BOATS  
AS THEY SAILED ONTO THAILAND  
AND EVERYDAY I'D HOPE AND PRAY  
THAT ONE DAY I'D BE ON 'EM  
AND ESCAPE

**NGUYEN TRAN**

TO THE PROMISED LAND

**ALL STUDENTS**

AMERICA SO VERY BIG  
AMERICA SO GRAND  
AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL  
IT'S EVERYBODY'S LAND



**VUONG ANH**

AND WHEN AT LAST  
I SAW MY CHANCE  
MY FAMILY I COLLECTED  
AND FINAL BOWS AND HONORS PAID  
TO ANCESTORS RESPECTED  
AND WE LEFT

**NGUYEN TRAN**

AT HIGHEST TIDE

**VUONG ANH**

ON STORMY SEAS  
WE TOOK ALOFT  
MY FAMILY SCARED AND CRYING  
AND PIRATES, SOLDIERS BE ALL DAMNED  
AT LAST THE SUN WAS SHINING  
AND WE LANDED

**NGUYEN TRAN**

IN A CAMP

*VUONG ANH throws up his hands in  
exasperation.*

**ALL STUDENTS**

AMERICA SO VERY BIG  
AMERICA SO GRAND  
AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL  
IT'S EVERYBODY'S LAND

**VUONG ANH**

FOR FOUR LONG YEARS WE WAITED  
FOR THE RED CROSS TO AGREE  
THEY CLASSIFIED MY FAMILY  
AS A GROUP OF REFUGEES  
AND WE WAITED

**NGUYEN TRAN**

AND WAITED AND WAITED

*VUONG ANH nods in agreement.*

**VUONG ANH**

THEN FINALLY THE DAY IT CAME  
WHEN WE WERE ALL SET FREE  
AND VISAS, PASSPORTS ISSUED  
TO THAT LAND OF LIBERTY  
(exalting)  
AMERICA

**NGUYEN TRAN**

AT LAST AT LAST!

**ALL STUDENTS**

AMERICA SO VERY BIG  
AMERICA SO GRAND  
AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL  
IT'S EVERYBODY'S LAND

**VUONG ANH**

I THANK MY GOD  
MOST EVERYDAY  
OR BLESSINGS I'VE RECEIVED  
I THANK HIM FOR THE CHANCE TO LIVE  
IN TRUE DEMOCRACY  
AMERICA

**NGUYEN TRAN**

IT'S A MIRACLE

*VUONG ANH nods again.*

**VUONG ANH**

AND SOMETIMES WHEN I MISS MY HOME  
MY HOME ACROSS THE SEA  
AMERICA, AMERICA  
GOD SHED HIS GRACE ON THEE  
AND I SMILE

**NGUYEN TRAN**

AND THANK AMERICA

*VUONG ANH smiles broadly.*

**ALL STUDENTS**

AMERICA SO VERY BIG  
AMERICA SO GRAND  
AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL  
IT'S EVERYBODY'S LAND

*The STUDENTS conclude their  
tribute to their newfound  
country with a stirring  
rendition of the final lines  
from Irving Berlin's classic,  
"America the Beautiful."*

**SOPANNY**

AND CROWN THY GOOD

**ENRIQUE**

WITH BROTHERHOOD

**ALL STUDENTS**

FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

*The STUDENTS cheer. A warm glow  
fills the air as THEY begin to go  
their separate ways.*

**JOSE**

Okay you guys. See you mañana, huh? I have to get to my job at  
the restaurant.

*JOSE is followed by ENRIQUE who  
offers a slight wave to the  
others as THEY exit. RICO calls  
to them.*

**RICO**

Hasta mañana, Jose. Adios Enrique. (to ROSETTA) Vamos Rosetta?

**ROSETTA**

Okay. (to others) Bye.

*THEY exit.*

*VUONG ANH bows.*

**VUONG ANH**

I, too, must take my leave. Until our next meeting.

**JOSEF**

Goodbye. Have a nice day.

*VUONG ANH exits followed by NGUYEN TRAN, SOPANNY and MEI LI. THEY stand off to one side of the stage. The RUSSIAN STUDENTS remain. VLADIMIR and FANYA begin to speak in their native tongue while JOSEF and LAVONNA translate into English.*

**VLADIMIR**

Eta bil prik拉斯ni orok.

**JOSEF**

(It was a wonderful class.)

**FANYA**

Da. Uchitsel priyanich.

**LAVONNA**

(Yes, the teacher is nice.)

*THEY chuckle.*

**VLADIMIR**

Shto ti sobirayahasya dialet sivodnya?

**JOSEF**

(What are you going to do today?)

**FANYA**

Ya idu damoy gatovitz abyet.

**LAVONNA**

(I'm going home to cook.)

*From upper stage left enter a RUSSIAN AMERICAN MAN and RUSSIAN AMERICAN WOMAN who enter and stop and observe the immigrants.*

**RUSSIAN AMERICAN WOMAN**

Look at those women. One of them is younger than the other, yet they both remind me of my grandmother.

**RUSSIAN AMERICAN MAN**

I know. Every time I hear Russian it reminds me of when I was a little boy. My grandparents used to speak it all the time.

**RUSSIAN AMERICAN WOMAN**

Mine did, too. And if they weren't speaking it, they were always telling me about it. You know... life in the old country this... life in the old country that...

*THEY chuckle.*

**RUSSIAN AMERICAN MAN**

You know, it's funny. We're so different from this new group of immigrants... yet we're so alike.

**RUSSIAN AMERICAN WOMAN**

*(marveling)*

Yeah. Ain't it the truth.

*(up music: Who Are These People From Russia?)*

**RUSSIAN AMERICAN WOMAN**

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM RUSSIA?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE CROSS THE SEA?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM RUSSIA?  
DON'T YOU KNOW THEY LOOK A LOT LIKE ME

**RUSSIAN AMERICAN MAN**

BRAVING BREAD LINES IN THE SNOWY DEPTHS OF WINTER  
FACING TRIALS AND DESPAIR ON EVERY HAND  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM RUSSIA?  
WOULD WE TOO NOT HAVE SAILED FOR BETTER LANDS?

*The RUSSIAN AMERICAN MAN and  
RUSSIAN AMERICAN WOMAN return  
upstage left as the RUSSIAN  
STUDENTS walk upstage right to  
rejoin their classmates.*

*Enter lower stage left a young CHINESE AMERICAN MAN and CHINESE AMERICAN WOMAN. Enter lower stage right, an older CHINESE IMMIGRANT MAN and CHINESE IMMIGRANT WOMAN. The immigrants, dressed in poorer clothing, begin to speak in their native language. Mei LI and NGUYEN TRAN step forward to translate.*

**CHINESE IMMIGRANT MAN**

Gamyat hoyeet uh.

**NGUYEN TRAN**

(It's hot today.)

**CHINESE IMMIGRANT WOMAN**

Fan doh okay hoyee yumpt  
bui dong cha.

**MEI LI**

(When we get home we can  
drink some refreshing tea.)

**CHINESE IMMIGRANT MAN**

Yahm yuen jao fangong.  
it's back to work.)

**NGUYEN TRAN**

(Finish your drink and then

**CHINESE IMMIGRANT WOMAN**

Hai mei gwok jao hai gum  
jo guh lu.

**MEI LI**

(In America, that's what you  
do. Work hard and succeed.

*The CHINESE AMERICAN COUPLE look to the CHINESE IMMIGRANTS and sing.*

**CHINESE AMERICAN MAN**

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM CHINA?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE CROSS THE SEA?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM CHINA?  
DON'T YOU KNOW THEY LOOK A LOT LIKE ME

**CHINESE AMERICAN WOMAN**

THEY SAY THE DAYS WERE DARK BEFORE THE REVOLUTION  
AFTER THAT MY FATHER SAID THINGS GOT MUCH WORSE  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM CHINA?  
WOULD WE TOO NOT HAVE TRIED TO FLEE THAT CURSE?

*The CHINESE AMERICANS join the  
RUSSIAN AMERICANS while the  
CHINESE IMMIGRANTS join MEI LI  
and NGUYEN TRAN.*

**SHOPPING LADIES & CHINESE AMERICANS**

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM RUSSIA, CHINA?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE CROSS THE SEA?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM RUSSIA, CHINA?  
DON'T YOU KNOW THEY LOOK A LOT LIKE ME

*Enter smoking a cigar lower  
stage left, CUBAN AMERICAN MAN  
followed by, CUBAN AMERICAN  
WOMAN. From lower stage right  
enter two Cuban immigrants,  
CUBAN IMMIGRANT #1 and CUBAN  
IMMIGRANT #2. JOSE and ENRIQUE  
translate.*

**CUBAN IMMIGRANT #1**

Que bola, acere? Que vuelta?

**JOSE**

(How are you, man? What's  
up?)

**CUBAN IMMIGRANT #2**

Nada, monina. Lo mismo.  
Todo igual.

**ENRIQUE**

(Nothing much, buddy. The  
same. Everything's the  
same.)

**CUBAN IMMIGRANT #1**

Tratando de cogerle la  
vuelta.

**JOSE**

(Trying to adapt to this new  
life.)

**CUBAN IMMIGRANT #2**

Si.

**ENRIQUE**

(Yes.)

*The CUBAN AMERICANS sing.*

**CUBAN AMERICAN MAN**

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM CUBA?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE CROSS THE SEA?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM CUBA?  
DON'T YOU KNOW THEY LOOK A LOT LIKE ME

**CUBAN AMERICAN WOMAN**

FROM THE FALLING GRIMY STREETS OF OLD HAVANA  
TO THE GOLDEN SANDS THAT GRACE MIAMI SHORE  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM CUBA?  
WOULD WE TOO NOT HAVE FACED THE CANNON'S ROAR?

*The CUBAN AMERICANS walk upstage  
left to join their counterparts  
while the CUBAN IMMIGRANTS join  
RICO and ROSETTA and STUDENTS  
upstage right.*

**SHOPPING LADIES, CHINESE & CUBAN  
AMERICANS**

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM RUSSIA, CHINA, CUBA?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE CROSS THE SEA?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM RUSSIA, CHINA, CUBA?  
DON'T YOU KNOW THEY LOOK A LOT LIKE ME

*Enter lower stage left enter  
sporting fine tweed suits and  
new wool caps, two older Irish-  
Americans, IRISH-AMERICAN MAN  
and IRISH-AMERICAN WOMAN.*

*Enter lower stage right,  
straight from Donegal, a young  
Irish couple, an IRISH LAD and  
IRISH LASS who speak in a lovely  
Irish brogue.*

**IRISH IMMIGRANT LAD**

Ah, 'tis a brilliant day.

**IRISH IMMIGRANT LASS**

To be sure it beats the weather back in Donegal.

**IRISH IMMIGRANT LAD**

Donegal isn't so bad. Everything's there a man might need.

**IRISH IMMIGRANT LASS**

Everything but me.



*THEY* laugh as *HE* whirls her around. The *IRISH AMERICANS* exchange a knowing glance as the *IRISH AMERICAN MAN* begins to sing.

**IRISH AMERICAN MAN**

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM IRELAND?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE CROSS THE SEA?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM IRELAND?  
DON'T YOU KNOW THEY LOOK A LOT LIKE ME

**IRISH AMERICAN WOMAN**

AH THOSE BLACK DAYS OF THE GREAT POTATO FAMINE  
SURE THE HUNGER STILL REMAINS HOW MANY DIED  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM IRELAND?  
WOULD WE TOO NOT HAVE JOINED THE RISING TIDE?

*The IRISH AMERICANS walk upstage left to join their counterparts while the IRISH IMMIGRANTS walk upstage right and do the same. ALL join together for the final refrain.*

**ALL**

WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM RUSSIA,  
CHINA, CUBA, IRELAND?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE CROSS THE SEA?  
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE FROM RUSSIA,  
CHINA, CUBA, IRELAND?  
DON'T YOU KNOW THEY LOOK A LOT LIKE ME

*The RUSSIAN, CHINESE, CUBAN AND IRISH AMERICANS exit while the IMMIGRANTS remain on stage.*

*Enter goose-stepping, the THUG BOYS. SPIKE, the Thug Boys Leader, raises his hand and the marching stops. HE wastes no time in confronting the newcomers.*

**SPIKE**

Look at 'em there. Damn foreigners - come to this country to destroy our country and tear down our American way of life. Well, that's not gonna happen. Not on our watch.

*SPIKE turns away from the immigrants and throws an evil glare at the audience before beginning his low dirge.*

*(up music: The Thug Boys Song)*

**SPIKE**

WE ARE THE GHASTLY CREW  
WE KNOW WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU  
WE DO WHAT WE WANT TO DO  
CHARLIE

**THUG BOYS**

(HUM)

**SPIKE**

WE LIVE IN TUMBLE DOWN  
WHERE OUR SHIT DON'T TOUCH THE GROUND  
WE KNOW WHAT'S UP AND DOWN  
CHARLIE

**THUG BOYS**

(HUM)

*The THUG BOYS begin to goose-step in place.*

**THUG BOYS (Continued)**

WE ARE THE THUG BOYS  
WE RUN THE SHOW  
WE'LL TELL YOU WHO CAN STAY  
AND WHO MUST GO  
WE ARE THE THUG BOYS  
THIS IS OUR TOWN

*The THUG BOYS seize several of the IMMIGRANTS by the collar and threaten them.*

**THUG BOYS (Continued)**

WE'LL BEAT YOU UP BOYS  
WE'LL KNOCK YOU DOWN

*THEY push the IMMIGRANTS aside.*

**THUG BOYS (Continued)**

OH GET ON OUT OF, OH GET ON OUT OF HERE  
WE DIDN'T INVITE YOU  
NOBODY ASKED YOU  
SO PACK YOUR BAGS AND GET RIGHT OUT OF HERE

OH GET ON OUT OF, OH GET ON OUT OF HERE  
WE DIDN'T INVITE YOU  
NOBODY ASKED YOU  
SO PACK YOUR BAGS AND GET RIGHT OUT OF HERE

*The IMMIGRANTS stand in fearful silence save the IRISH LAD who raises his voice in protest.*

**IRISH LAD**

WHAT THESE MEN SAY  
CAN'T BE TRUE OF US (JEER I)  
THEY TOO WERE IMMIGRANTS (JEER II)

**JEER I**

GET OUT OF HERE  
GET OUT OF HERE  
WE DON'T WANT YOU  
IS THAT CLEAR?

**JEER II**

LESS THAN TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO  
WITH A PIPE AND A BOW  
AND A FIDDLER TO AND FRO  
NOW THEY'D DENY US THE SAME (JEER I)  
NOW THEY'D DENY US THE SAME (JEER II)

GET OUT OF HERE  
GET OUT THE DOOR  
WE DON'T WANT YOU  
ANYMORE

**THUG BOYS**

WE ARE THE THUG BOYS  
KNOW OUR NAME  
WE'LL ROUND YOU UP AT NIGHT  
WE HAVE NO SHAME

**THUG BOYS (Continued)**

WE ARE THE THUG BOYS  
 DON'T YOU SEE  
 YOUR LIVES MEAN NOTHING  
 YOU'D BETTER FLEE

WE KNOW WHAT'S RIGHT  
 WE KNOW WHAT'S RIGHT  
 IT'S NOT THE BLACK  
 IT'S JUST THE WHITE  
 WE KNOW WHAT'S RIGHT  
 WE KNOW WHAT'S RIGHT  
 AT SIX O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING

WE ARE THE THUG BOYS  
 STAND ASIDE  
 YOUR HORSE IS SADDLED UP  
 IT'S TIME TO RIDE  
 WE ARE THE THUG BOYS  
 (AND) WE DON'T CARE  
 WE'LL SEND YOU BACK FROM WHERE YOU CAME  
 BACK OVER THERE

OVER THERE FROM WHERE YOU CAME  
 WE WILL SWEEP YOU DOWN THE DRAIN  
 STAY AWAY FROM OUR BACK DOOR  
 WE DON'T WANT YOU ANYMORE  
 WE ARE THE THUG BOYS

LET'S TALK PLAIN  
 WE'LL WASH YOU OUT LIKE DUST  
 IN A DRIVING RAIN  
 WE ARE THE THUG BOYS  
 IF YOU PLEASE  
 NOBODY WANTS YOU  
 DAMN REFUGEES

*The IRISH LAD again gives reply.*

**IRISH LAD**

WHAT THESE MEN SAY  
 CAN'T BE TRUE OF US (JEER I)  
 THEY TOO WERE IMMIGRANTS (JEER II)

**JEER I**

GET OUT OF HERE  
 GET OUT OF HERE  
 WE DON'T WANT YOU  
 IS THAT CLEAR?

*The THUG BOYS cut him off.*

**THUG BOYS**

DON'T TELL US WE WERE IMMIGRANTS  
THAT'S JUST A BUNCH OF COMMIE SHIT  
SO HURRY UP AND FLY AWAY  
YOUR TIME WILL SOON BE NEARING  
WE ARE THE THUG BOYS  
BOMBS AWAY  
AS STORM CLOUDS GATHER  
WE'LL HAVE OUR DAY

*The THUG BOYS turn and face the audience menacingly.*

**THUG BOYS (Continued)**

WE ARE THE THUG BOYS  
LOOK AROUND  
WE'RE COMING TO YOUR BLOCK  
TO YOUR HOMETOWN

*The THUG BOYS stand mean and resolute while the IMMIGRANTS stare back at them disbelieving and frightened.*

*(Blackout)*

ACT I

Scene VI

Setting: The Teacher's Room

*At Rise: A Teacher's meeting.*

*The TEACHERS are chatting amiably away. MS. BEASLEY raps a ruler on the table to call them to order.*

**MS. BEASLEY**

Alright teachers, if you would please come to order. Mr. White has called this special meeting today because he has some very important that he wishes to say to everyone.

*The TEACHERS quiet down.*

**MS. BEASLEY (Continued)**

So, without further ado, Mr. White.

*SHE smiles to MR. WHITE as HE grimly takes the lectern.*

**MR. WHITE**

Teachers of Roosevelt Jr. High. There is in this country as I know you're aware, a crisis in education. Everywhere, schools are being closed as deeper and deeper budget cuts are making it virtually impossible to keep open the classes and programs that have traditionally been offered to our students including sports, arts and music as we have in the past.

*HE shoots a sharp look at the TEACHERS.*

**MR. WHITE (Continued)**

Certainly we are not immune to such actions being taken here at Roosevelt Junior High School. The State Accreditation Commission has made that clear. Certainly, there are those who would be

**MR. WHITE (Continued)**

just fine having our students pack their bags and go back home to whichever country it is they came from.

*The TEACHERS shift nervously in their seats.*

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

*(caustically)*

Someone ought to put those crackpots on a boat and ship them back to wherever it is that they came from.

*The TEACHERS murmur in agreement.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

But where would that be?

**MR. ALBERT**

*(obtusely)*

Argentina?

**MR. DUGAN**

You might have something there, Mr. Albert.

**MS. NEILSEN**

*(exasperated)*

Honestly. Our students have as much right to be here as anyone.

**MR. DANIELS**

*(irate)*

If we were to judge all those deserving to be here according to their overall merit, I am sure that many of our students would have even more right to be here than a lot of our own homegrown idiots do.

**MR. ALBERT**

He's right. We don't need any more outside grown idiots; we've got enough of our own homegrown ones right here.

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

You would know, Mr. Albert.

*The TEACHERS snicker.*

**MS. RODRIGUEZ (Continued)**

"America for the Americans." That's a laugh. Hah! Have they taken a good look in the mirror lately? (hoots) That's a hoot! Hah! They don't look like Indians to me!

*The TEACHERS snicker again. MS. RODRIGUEZ rises from her seat to expound upon the subject to the amusement of her colleagues.*

*(up music: They Don't Look Like Indians To Me)*

**MS. RODRIGUEZ (Continued)**

BY THE SHORES OF GITCHEE GUMI  
IF YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT I SAY THEN SUE ME  
LIVED THE MAIDEN POCAHONTAS  
WHOSE MEETING WITH JOHN SMITH  
WOULD PROVE CALAMITOUS

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS  
A PEACEFUL EXISTENCE  
UNTIL THIS CHANGED AT  
THE SETTLER'S INSISTENCE

AND NOW THEY WOULD CHASE  
NEW SETTLER'S AWAY  
CLAIM THIS LAND  
AS THEIR CHALET  
THEY PUT ON AIRS AND THEY MAKE A DISPLAY  
BUT THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE INDIANS TO ME (HAY-NA HAY-NA)  
NO, THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE INDIANS TO ME (HAY-NA HAY-NA 4X)

WHAT GIVES THEM THE REGAL RIGHT  
TO SAY WHO STAYS OR GETS OUT OF SIGHT?  
THEY HOLD COURT LIKE A BLOOD THIRSTY KNIGHT  
BUT THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE INDIANS TO ME (HAY-NA HAY-NA)  
NO, THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE INDIANS TO ME (HAY-NA HAY-NA 4X)

*The TEACHERS begin an impromptu Native-American inspired dance as an amazed MR. WHITE and MS. BEASLEY look on.*



**MS. RODRIGUEZ (Continued)**

ENGLISH ONLY IS THEIR ANSWER  
 BUT SHOULDN'T IT BE CHEROKEE OR NARRAGANSETT  
 NICE YOU GAVE GERONIMO A CADILLAC  
 BUT MAYBE WHILE YOU'RE AT IT  
 YOU COULD GIVE HIM SOME LAND BACK

PEACE AND HARMONY EARTH AND SKY  
 DON'T YOU THINK IT'S WORTH A TRY?  
 I LISTEN TO THEIR HATE AND I WONDER WHY  
 CAUSE THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE INDIANS TO ME (HAY-NAH HAY-NAH)  
 NO, THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE INDIANS TO ME (HAY-NA HAY-NAH4X)

*As the TEACHERS carry on with their indigenous people's inspired demonstration, MS. NEILSEN calls to MS. BEASLEY to join them. To everyone's surprise, SHE does so and in turn invites MR. WHITE who although initially hesitant, also joins the hoopla. All dance merrily around the Teachers' Room as MR. WHITE himself sings the final refrain.*

**MR. WHITE**

PEACE AND HARMONY EARTH AND SKY  
 DON'T YOU THINK IT'S WORTH A TRY?  
 I LISTEN TO THEIR HATE AND I WONDER WHY  
 CAUSE THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE INDIANS TO ME

**ALL**

NO, THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE INDIANS TO ME

**MR. WHITE**

NO, THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE INDIANS TO ME

*MR. WHITE calls the TEACHERS back to order.*

**MR. WHITE**

Alright now teachers. Let's settle down.

*The TEACHERS return to their seats.*

**MR. WHITE (Continued)**

Now I don't like this anymore than you do, but in addition to the threat of complete school closure, as if that weren't enough, I've also received a memo from the School Board reminding us to put greater emphasis on the teaching of American Culture in our classrooms.

**MR. JACOBSON**

What do they mean "greater emphasis?" Teaching American culture has always been a key component of our lessons.

**MR. DANIELS**

What do they expect from us anyway? Are we supposed to go to class wrapped in the American flag?

**MR. ALBERT**

*(densely)*

Oh, no. I'm sure they wouldn't want that. That would be a desecration.

**MS. NEILSEN**

I'm sure Mr. Daniels didn't mean that.

**MR. DANIELS**

True, I didn't. but I hate when downtown tries to dictate what we teach in the classroom. Whatever happened to Academic Freedom?!!!

*The TEACHERS shake their heads in wonder as the SCHOOL BELL RINGS and MR. WHITE adjourns the meeting.*

**MR. WHITE**

That will be all teachers. Have a good class.

*The TEACHERS make their way to the door.*

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

Ain't that a bitch?

**MR. DUGAN**

It's not bad if you're standing on top of the hill, but it's a flood from where I'm standing. (to MR. JOHNSON) What about you, Mr. Johnson? Are you planning to take Mr. White's talk to heart and put greater emphasis on the teaching of " American Culture?"

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(considering)*

Well, I suppose that since we're always trying to do something new in the classroom and since I'm a new teacher, everything I do is new, at least for me, so sure, why not? Heck, it could be fun.

**MR. DUGAN**

*(cheering him on)*

That's the sprit, Mr. Johnson. Spoken like a true rookie. You just keep that "gung-ho" attitude uppermost in your mind and you're sure to make a great teacher!

**MR. JOHNSON**

You think so? Well, I hope so. Thanks. See you.

*MR. JOHNSON exits.*

**MR. ALBERT**

He'll never make it.

**MS. NEILSEN**

Hush, you.

*(Blackout)*

ACT I Scene VII

Setting: Room 203

*At Rise: The STUDENTS sit patiently at their desks.*

*MR. JOHNSON takes a place behind the lectern and greets his STUDENTS. RICO is happily chatting with ROSETTA.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Good morning class. Sorry I'm late. We had a teacher's meeting this morning.

**RICO**

Take your time, teacher. No rush.

*The students laugh.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

I thought we would do something different in class today.

*The STUDENTS stop laughing and turn their attention to the teacher.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

You know... sometimes it can be frustrating to study a new language.

*The STUDENTS nod in agreement.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

And while we teachers try to do our best, sometimes the methods and materials we use might be considered by some to be somewhat old-fashioned or outdated.

*The STUDENTS lean forward in their seats.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

For example, although the English we study in our textbooks is grammatically correct, you've probably found that when you leave the classroom, few Americans actually "speak" the more formal English that we study here in the classroom.

*The STUDENTS stir in agreement.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

So today I thought we would practice some American English.

*The STUDENTS brighten.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

It is quite different, you know, than British English. In fact, here in America, we've tried to make it so on purpose, ever since the days of the American Revolution when we fought for our independence from England and began to forge our own identity as a new nation. Although we've kept much of the writing system we inherited from Great Britain, our way of speaking is quite intentionally independent as is our country of America.

*MR. JOHNSON pulls down a chart to illustrate the differences. On the top left-hand corner a heading reads, "British English" while on the right it reads, "American English." MR. JOHNSON picks up a pointer from the chalkboard.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Now first class, please listen.

*HE raises the pointer and uses it to tap his way down and across the chart to illustrate his lesson.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)****British English****American English**

What do you

Whaddaya

Where do you

Wheredaya

When do you

Whendaya

Who do you

Whodaya

Why do you

Whydaya

How do you

Howdaya

*The STUDENTS are puzzled by this strange recital. LAVONNA raises her hand.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Lavonna?

**LAVONNA***(skeptical)*

Excuse me, please, teacher, but this is usual English?

**MR. JOHNSON**

In England, no, but in America, yes. (to the class) Now question: How many of you want to learn to speak British English? Raise your hands.

*The STUDENTS sit stiffly.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Alright, then. Now how many of you want to learn to speak like an American?

*The STUDENTS' hands shoot up excitedly.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Well, of course you do. After all, this is America and in America, we speak American English, so it's only natural that you want to learn how to speak like an American.

*The STUDENTS nod. MR. JOHNSON continues.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Now then, this American English, this "whaddaya, wheredaya, whendaya" English; how common is it? When do we speak it? Can we speak it with our family?

**STUDENTS**

*(cautious)*

Yes?

**MR. JOHNSON**

Yes. How about with our friends and neighbors?

**STUDENTS**

*(more cautious)*

Yes?

**MR. JOHNSON**

Yes.

*HE attempts a trick question.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

How about at the workplace?

*The STUDENTS respond with a resounding "no." MR. JOHNSON smiles knowingly and answers as if it were a riddle.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Yes, we do... We speak this way even at the workplace. Everybody speaks like this in America. Friends, families, doctors, lawyers, bus drivers, cooks, even the President of the United States. But of course, he speaks it. After all, he is the chief American!

*The STUDENTS are taken by this idea and turn to their classmates to discuss it. MR. JOHNSON allows them a moment before returning to his lesson.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Now let's everyone repeat.

*HE raises the pointer and taps it once on the "British English" side of the chart which reads, "What do you."*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

What do you.

*HE taps his pointer again and the STUDENTS repeat.*

**STUDENTS**

What do you.

*HE taps the pointer on the "American English" side of the chart which reads, "Whaddaya?"*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Whaddaya.

*HE taps the pointer again and the STUDENTS repeat but this time with less confidence.*

**STUDENTS**

Whaddaya.

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(encouraging)*

Good. Again.



*HE taps the pointer three more times repeating it with each tap.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Whaddaya. Whaddaya. Whaddaya.

*The STUDENTS laugh but don't repeat..*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Let's try it again.

*MR. JOHNSON taps the pointer three more times.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Whaddaya. Whaddaya. Whaddaya.

*This time the STUDENTS repeat.*

**STUDENTS**

Whaddaya. Whaddaya. Whaddaya.

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(pleased)*

Good. Now let's try the next one.

*MR. JOHNSON repeats the procedure.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Where do you.

**STUDENTS**

Where do you.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Wheredaya.

**STUDENTS**

Wheredaya.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Wheredaya. Wheredaya. Wheredaya.

**STUDENTS**

Wheredaya. Wheredaya. Wheredaya.

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(excited)*

Yes! That's it! Now let's try it the American way.

*HE taps the pointer down the entire length of the "American English" side of the CHART and the students repeat each "WH" word cluster as HE points.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Whaddaya, wheredaya, whendaya, whodaya, whydaya, howdaya.

**STUDENTS**

Whaddaya, wheredaya, whendaya, whodaya, whydaya, howdaya.

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(excited)*

Yes! Now let's try it backwards.

*HE taps the pointer up the CHART as HE recites.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Howdaya, whydaya, whodaya, whendaya, wheredaya, whaddaya.

*The STUDENTS howl in excitement but repeat.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Howdaya, whydaya, whodaya, whendaya, wheredaya, whaddaya.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Yes! Splendid! Now let's try this. I'll give you a line using written or traditional British English pronunciation and you give me back that line using American English. Are you ready?

*The STUDENTS straighten up in anticipation of the drill.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Alright, then. Here we go.

*(up music - Song: American Pronunciation Song)*

**MR. JOHNSON**

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?  
WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?  
WHEN DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE  
TO THE MOVIE SHOW?

**STUDENTS**

WHADDAYA WANNA DO?  
WHERE DAYA WANNA GO?  
WHEN DAYA WANNA LEAVE  
TO THE MOVIE SHOW?

**MR. JOHNSON & STUDENTS**

IT'S ALL IN A DAY  
WHATEVER YOU DO  
WHATEVER YOU SAY  
THAT GETS YOU ON YOUR WAY

**MR. JOHNSON**

WHO DO YOU WANT TO MEET?  
WHY DO YOU WANT TO BE THERE?  
HOW DO YOU WANT TO GET THERE?

**STUDENTS**

WHODAYA WANNA MEET?  
WHY DAYA WANNA BE THERE?  
HOW DAYA WANNA GET THERE?

**MR. JOHNSON & STUDENTS**

WELL, LET'S NOT BE LATE!

IT'S ALL IN A DAY  
WHATEVER YOU DO  
WHATEVER YOU SAY  
THAT GETS YOU ON YOUR WAY

**MR. JOHNSON**

YOU SOUND SO VERY GOOD

JUST LIKE I KNEW YOU WOULD

IT'S AMAZING HOW

**STUDENTS**

WE SOUND LIKE  
WE WERE BORN HERE

WE'D LIKE TO  
GIVE YOU THREE CHEERS

IT'S INCREDIBLE HOW

**MR. JOHNSON & STUDENTS**

WE CAN LEARN SO MUCH IF WE TRY

(BUT) IT'S ALL IN A DAY  
WHATEVER YOU DO  
WHATEVER YOU SAY  
THAT GETS YOU ON YOUR WAY

**MR. JOHNSON**

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?  
WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?

**STUDENTS**

WHADDAYA WANNA DO?  
WHERE DAYA WANNA GO?

**MR. JOHNSON & STUDENTS**

AS LONG AS YOU TRY  
YOU CAN GROW!

*MR. JOHNSON applauds the class.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

That was wonderful, class. Splendid. Splendid. Now those were the "Wh" questions, "What, where, when, who, why and how" followed by the auxiliary verb "do" plus the pronoun, "you." Now let's try it again, but this time ending the word group with the pronoun "he." First, please listen. What does he. Whadduzzy. Where does he. Whereduzzy. When does he. Whenduzzy. Who...

*From down the hall, the sound of  
goose steps marching is heard.  
It is the THUG BOYS singing an  
ominous reprise of their  
dastardly dirge. ALL freeze.*

**SOPANNY**

*(alarmed)*

What's that, teacher?

*The STUDENTS look to MR. JOHNSON with alarm, but HE too is at a loss for words.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

I ... I'm not sure, Sopanny.

*Outside in the hallway, the THUG BOYS goose-step towards the classroom.*

**LARRY**

You sure this is a good idea, Spike?

**SPIKE**

It's a good idea 'cuz I say it is.

*The STUDENTS grow more worried.*

**VUONG ANH**

Something is wrong.

**LAVONNA**

*(acidly)*

They sound like Cossacks to me.

*FANYA nods knowingly to LAVONNA. FANYA stands beside LAVONNA. JOSEF and VLADIMIR stand behind them. SOPANNY screams.*

**SOPANNY**

Make them go away, teacher!!!

*Before HE can speak, the classroom door bursts open and the THUG BOYS enter still goose stepping.*

*SOPANNY screams and runs for cover to NGUYEN TRAN and VUONG ANH as ROSETTA runs to RICO.*

*LAVONNA and FANYA join hands together, their eyes throwing daggers as if to say, "We have seen your kind before."*

*JOSEF and VLADIMIR comically consider holding hands together but decide against it.*

*MEI LI stays close to MR. JOHNSON who stands face-to-face with SPIKE THE THUG BOY LEADER.*

*SPIKE raises his hand. The marching stops. HE stares coldly at MR. JOHNSON before giving the order to his ghastly crew.*

**SPIKE**

Alright, boys. You know what to do.

*MR. JOHNSON tries bravely to intercede.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Now wait a minute. This is a classroom. You can't just come in here and disrupt it. Who do you think you are anyway?

*Infuriated by the question, SPIKE whirls wildly around to MR. JOHNSON.*

**SPIKE**

*(with crazed glare)*

Who do we think we are?... We're your worst nightmare, teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(dryly)*

I don't doubt that.

*The two men stare fiercely at one another. SPIKE THE THUG BOY LEADER pushes MR. JOHNSON aside.*

**SPIKE**

Now move aside, teach... if you don't wanna get hurt.

*MR. JOHNSON does not move.*

*Enraged, SPIKE strikes MR. JOHNSON on the jaw hurling him to the ground. HE leers over him.*

**SPIKE**

I told you to move.

*MEI LI screams and runs to MR. JOHNSON'S aid.*

**SPIKE (Continued)**

*(impatient)*

Well... what are you waiting for?

*Beat as ALL await his next words.*

**SPIKE (Continued)**

Wreck this place!

*The THUG BOYS begin their foul deed. Desks and chairs are overturned. Student belongings are picked up and hurled across the room. Classroom maps and posters are torn from the walls and ripped into pieces. Even the American flag is seized from its stand and trampled in the frenzy.*

*MR. JOHNSON sits up nursing his aching jaw. HE stares in horror at the wanton display of vandalism occurring before his eyes. HE attempts to stand but is held back by MEI LI.*

**MEI LI**

No... wait... stay down. They will hurt you again.

*MR. JOHNSON is confounded by MEI LI's actions but before HE can reply, SPIKE calls out to his henchmen for a stop to the madness.*

**SPIKE**

Enough!

*The THUG BOYS, however, do not stop. Crazed with insanity, THEY carry on with their savagery. SPIKE roars.*

**SPIKE (Continued)**

I said, "That's enough."

*The THUG BOYS slowly cease their maniacal actions as they reluctantly finish destroying the last few classroom items at hand.*

*While no outward glee is shown, THE THUG BOYS seem strangely satisfied at the bedlam they have sown. The STUDENTS are stunned. RICO can barely contain his outrage.*

*MR. JOHNSON attempts to stand again. This time, MEI LI offers him her hand.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(grateful)*

Thank you.

*SPIKE storms over to the two who are still dazed.*



**SPIKE**

This is just a warning. One way or another, we'll get rid of you. We'll destroy your whole school and all that is stands for, which is the breaking down of America's heritage.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Whose heritage? To close down this school would be like cutting off your nose to spite your face, which in your case might not be such a bad idea. Immigrants built this country. We should help them build it. They don't need you to knock them down.

**SPIKE**

Sez you. (to the STUDENTS) Get this straight. We don't need youse (sic) foreigners here and we don't want youse (sic). The best thing youse (sic) can do is just pack your bags and get the hell out of my country. Comprendre?

*RICO can take it no more. and  
cries out defiantly.*

**RICO**

We will never leave! This is our country, too! Viva America!

*HE rushes from ROSETTA's side to  
challenge SPIKE but is  
intercepted by SHADY who knocks  
him to the ground.*

*ROSETTA screams and runs to his  
side. SHADY stands smirking over  
the crumpled figure.*

*Distraught by the violence,  
SOPANNY begins to sob. NGUYEN  
TRAN goes to comfort her  
throwing an angry glare at the  
THUG BOYS who jeer at him in  
return.*

**SPIKE**

*(to the students)*

Make it easy on yourself. Get out of here before things get really ugly. There's more than one way to skin a cat.

*MR. JOHNSON, his face ashen and his voice shaking with anger, confronts SPIKE, the THUG BOY LEADER again.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Now see here, I suggest that it is you who get out. The foul deed you have committed here today... to strike out at innocents who have done you no wrong... and to do so in a classroom... is an act of desecration which proves not only your cowardice but your disregard for the sanctity of the classroom. You are all cowards who are no better than common street thugs.

*(with rising anger)*

Now get out of here. Get out of my classroom.

*The THUG BOY LEADER sneers at this but retreats.*

**THUG BOY LEADER**

*(to his THUG BOYS)*

Come on.

*(to MR. JOHNSON and the STUDENTS)*

We've warned you.

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(quiet anger)*

Get out.

*The THUG BOYS exit. ROSETTA helps RICO to his feet. MR. JOHNSON walks over to them.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Are you alright, Rico?

**RICO**

*(recovering)*

I'm fine, teacher.

*RICO stares at the classroom, now disarrayed.*

**RICO (Continued)**

*(bravely)*

I guess we showed them, huh teacher?

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(sympathetically)*

I guess we did.

*ROSETTA and RICO go to SOPANNY  
to comfort her.*

**ROSETTA**

There, there, Sopanny. It'll be alright.

*SOPANNY ceases her sobbing and  
smiles at RICO and ROSETTA.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Now everything will be alright, class. Those men will not harm you anymore... at least, not today.

*The STUDENTS now past their  
initial shock begin to react.  
VUONG ANH speaks first.*

**VUONG ANH**

They remind me of the Communist soldier (sic) in Vietnam.

**NGUYEN TRAN**

That's right.

**JOSE**

And the soldiers in our village.

*The LATIN STUDENTS stir in  
agreement.*

**JOSEF**

You were right, teacher. They are no better than common street thugs.

*The RUSSIAN STUDENTS nod their heads. LAVONNA is more precise.*

**LAVONNA**

Those bastards.

*Some of the STUDENTS smile at LAVONNA'S outburst. Others are silent. Realizing her words are inappropriate for the classroom, SHE apologizes to MR. JOHNSON.*

**LAVONNA (Continued)**

I am sorry, teacher.

*MR. JOHNSON sighs.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

That's alright, Lavonna. They are bastards.

*LAVONNA smiles sheepishly.*

*Enter MR. WHITE and MS. BEASLEY who are horrified by the scene that greets them. MS. BEASLEY reels backwards, collapsing into MR. WHITE'S able arms.*

**MR. WHITE**

Steady, Ms. Beasley. Steady.

*As MR. WHITE attends to MS. BEASLEY, MR. JOHNSON stares again at the place of learning that had once been a safe haven for its inhabitants.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Well, come on, class. We'd better clean up.

*As the STUDENTS begin to somberly upright furniture and clear debris, SOPANNY walks by them all in a daze, stopping only when SHE reaches the trampled American flag. Falling to her knees, SHE gently picks up the tattered cloth and weeps again.*

*Silently NGUYEN TRAN watches.*

*(Blackout)*

## ACT II Scene I

Setting: A fog-swept dusk in a residential neighborhood nearby Roosevelt Junior High School. On one side of a street, a shiny Toyota Tercel sits parked in a driveway.

*At Rise: The evening fog rolls in.*

*Enter from across the street NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1 and NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #2 pulling home shopping carts filled with bags of groceries. The WOMEN stop for a rest.*

**NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1**

Phew! Let's rest for a minute. I'm beat.

**NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #2**

Me too. I must have bought enough groceries today to last a week. It was a mad house at the store today. And the clerk was so rude.

**NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1**

You're telling me. He wouldn't even take my coupon for fifty-cents off the vegetable oil and it said, ".50 cents off" plain as day. Just because the checkout scanner couldn't read it. You'd think it would kill him to do a regular customer a favor.

**NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #2**

Honestly. Sometimes I wonder whether good manners and common courtesy are a thing of the past.

**NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1**

*(wistful)*

I don't know, but it sure seems like it sometimes. (beat) Did you hear about those Thug Boys who went to the Junior High School and did all that damage?

**NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #2**

I sure did. I couldn't believe it. (indignant) It's a disgrace, that's what it is. (wistful) Why can't people just leave other people alone?

*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 lady.

**NEIGHBORHOOD WOMAN #1**

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

**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?

*The two women nod to each other  
as if to say, "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)*

## ACT II Scene II

Setting: Room 203

*At Rise: The STUDENTS sit at their desks talking quietly to one another. The classroom has returned to its previous condition minus a few of the original student-made posters.*

*In one corner of the room, a bright, new American flag stands proudly where its former self once stood.*

*MR. JOHNSON enters the classroom and the STUDENTS come to order.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Good morning, class.

**STUDENTS**

Good morning, teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON**

It's nice to see you all here today. (*looking around the room*) I see they've fixed up the classroom pretty nicely.

*HE studies the STUDENTS.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

*(reassuring)*

Now class, listen up. Those men who were here before won't bother you again. The police have arrested a number of them, and I don't think that any of them will be coming back to this school anytime soon.

*The STUDENTS appear relieved at this news and turn to their classmates to discuss it in hushed tones. MR. JOHNSON waits a moment before continuing.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Now today I thought we would begin with a quiet assignment, a writing assignment. I'd like you all to please take a look at this picture.

*HE holds up a large black and white commercial PICTURE of a young woman on a warm summer day resting against a tree in a park. The caption reads, "Daydreaming."*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

What is this woman doing?

*JOSE raises his hand. MR. JOHNSON calls on him.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Yes, Jose.

**JOSE**

It says, she is "Daydreaming."

**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. HE 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

**ENRIQUE (Continued)**

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

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



**VUONG ANH (Continued)**

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 GOD 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

*The STUDENTS finish up their  
 papers and put down their  
 pencils.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Is everyone finished?

*The STUDENTS nod.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Good. Then let's collect the papers. I'll return them to you next class after they're corrected.

*MR. JOHNSON collects the papers thanking the STUDENTS as HE does.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Thank you. Thank you.

*HE picks up ENRIQUE's paper and glances at it.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Looks good, Enrique. Thank you.

*ENRIQUE smiles. MR. JOHNSON collects the last of the papers and returns to the lectern.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Thank you, class. Before we leave today, I have an announcement to make. (beat) In one week's time... we will have the final test.

*The STUDENTS blanch visibly at this news. MR. JOHNSON continues.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

The test will cover all of the teaching points taught in the second half of our textbook. Part I will consist of fifty multiple choice questions, and Part II will consist of three essay questions, one of which is to be answered in no less than three paragraphs.

*The STUDENTS blanch again.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

So I suggest that you go home and review your texts, notes and any quizzes we've already had and study them in preparation for the test. Any questions?

*The STUDENTS have none.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Any answers?

*The STUDENTS have none.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

*(semi-scolding)*

Well, I'm sure you'll have some by test time. Alright, then.  
Class is dismissed.

*The STUDENTS rise from their desks. RICO turns to ROSETTA.*

**RICO**

Un examin. Ai!

**ROSETTA**

Is no problem, Rico. You will do fine, I'm sure.

*RICO nods but remains unsure.  
MR. JOHNSON overhears their remarks and calls once again to his class.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

And one more thing, class...

*The STUDENTS freeze.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

*(reassuring)*

Don't worry too much about this test. Remember, I'm not testing you so much, as I am myself to see how well I've taught you this past semester.

*The STUDENTS consider this concept for a moment but soon dismiss it as in their minds it remains up to them to succeed on their own. THEY continue to collect their belongings.*

*The RUSSIAN STUDENTS decide to stop by MR. JOHNSON's desk to ask him for some more information about the test.*

**LAVONNA**

Is grammar test, teacher?

**MR. JOHNSON**

Yes, Lavonna. It's mostly grammar. Just review your book. I'm sure you'll do fine.

**LAVONNA**

Thank you, teacher.

**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?

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

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

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****MR. JOHNSON/STUDENTS**

MR. JOHNSON, HOW CAN I EVER TELL YOU?

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

MR. JOHNSON, HOW COULD I EVEN DARE?

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

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

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.*

## ACT II Scene III

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.*

**MEI LI (Continued)**

*(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

**MEI LI (Continued)**

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 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

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



**MEI LI (Continued)**

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.*

*(Blackout)*

## ACT II Scene IV

Setting: Room 203

*At Rise: It is test day and MR. JOHNSON is busy at his desk sorting through test papers while his STUDENTS are anxiously awaiting their final instructions. MEI LI's thoughts are elsewhere.*

*MR. JOHNSON racks the test papers solidly together on his desktop before rising with them to the lectern.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Good morning, class. Well, this is the day. The day of the big test. Now don't be worried... *(with mirth)*... although I know I didn't sleep a wink last night.

*The STUDENTS laugh good-naturedly at this. MR. JOHNSON turns serious.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Now you'll have one hour to complete the test. As said before, Part I will consist of fifty multiple choice questions and Part II will consist of three essay questions, one of which is to be answered in no less than three paragraphs.

*MR. JOHNSON studies the STUDENTS.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Is everyone clear on this?

*The STUDENTS nod.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Good. Are there any questions before we begin?

*The STUDENTS have none.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Any answers?

*The STUDENTS have none.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Well, I'm sure I can expect some from you today.

*The STUDENTS respond to this with light, nervous laughter.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

I am now going to distribute the test to you face down. Please do not turn your paper over until you're instructed to do so. Is that clear? Lavonna, Fanya, Josef and Vladimir, is that clear?

*The RUSSIAN STUDENTS nod.*

**RUSSIAN STUDENTS**

Yes, teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Great. Just checking. Alright, here we go.

*HE begins to distribute the tests.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Good luck, Rico.

**RICO**

Thank you, teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Rosetta, good luck.

**ROSETTA**

Thank you, teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Lavonna. Fanya, Josef and Vladimir. Good luck.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Good luck, Mei Li.

*MEI LI says nothing. MR. JOHNSON hands out the remainder of the tests, returns to the lectern and turns to the CLOCK on the wall.*

**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?

**ENRIQUE (Continued)**

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

**STUDENTS (Continued)**

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.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Alright, class. Pencils up. Make sure your name is on the top left-hand corner of your papers before passing them up to the front of the class... Quickly!

*The STUDENTS hurriedly hand in  
 their papers to the front of the  
 class. MR. JOHNSON collects them  
 and returns to the lectern.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Thank you, class. The test results will be ready for you next Monday. That is as you know also the last day of the semester and yes, we will have a class party. Apparently, it is a tradition here at Roosevelt Junior High for classes to have an international "potluck" on the last day with students bringing samples of their country's food and culture for all of us to taste, explore and learn from. It sounds delicious, actually.

*THE STUDENTS laugh.*



**STUDENTS (Continued)**

While I'd be happy to help you with the planning, from what I hear, you're pretty much professionals when it comes to these things, so with your permission, I'll leave it to you.

*THE STUDENTS laugh again.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

As for me, I've got to get home to work on these tests, so I can correct them in time for our final class. I'll let you know the results then. Until then, have a great weekend.

*MR. JOHNSON exits. Most of the STUDENTS follow, but the LATIN STUDENTS remain to talk among themselves.*

**ROSETTA**

Gee, Mr. Johnson sure left in a hurry today.

**RICO**

He probably can't wait to start correcting those tests. I hope I passed.

**JOSE**

Don't worry, Rico. You passed, man. I know you've been studying.

**RICO**

For sure, man. I want to get a good grade like everybody.

**ENRIQUE**

*(woefully)*

I just hope it helps.

**ROSETTA**

Of course, it will. Enrique, how is your father doing?

**ENRIQUE**

It's very bad. The INS had a hearing on his visa status yesterday. They ruled he is illegal, and they are going to deport him back to Mexico next week.

**JOSE**

Hang tough, muchacho. Don't give up.

**ENRIQUE**

I'm not giving up. I just want to help mi padre.

**RICO**

Estará bien. It'll be fine.

**ROSETTA**

I'm sorry for you and your family, Enrique.

*ENRIQUE is silent as HE follows his classmates from the classroom. RICO puts a comforting arm on his friend's shoulder as THEY exit.*

## ACT II Scene V

Setting: The Teacher's Room

*At Rise: The TEACHERS are as always waiting for their next class. Most are sitting around the worktable except for MR. DUGAN who is pouring a cup of coffee. HE drops four quarters into the coffee can and takes a sip.*

**MR. DUGAN**

Now that's a good cup of coffee. This I don't mind paying for, but paying out of my pocket to make copies of classroom assignments for students because we've supposedly "surpassed" our "ration" of copies, that's something else.

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

Ain't that a bitch? I remember when the school district used to actually pay for those kinds of things.

**MR. DANIELS**

Did you hear that there's talk of them closing down another community college in a different state?

**MR. JOHNSON**

Which one?

**MR. DANIELS**

I don't know, but I heard it's a case similar to ours. Good academics and all, but someone in administration blew it with the finances, and the charter school hounds are on it like a rocket, so everyone's in hot water.

**MS. NEILSEN**

Why are they always picking on the schools anyways?

**MR. DUGAN**

Because we're the best deal in town and now that more community colleges are offering free tuition, it's driving the charter school backers nuts.

**MS. NEILSEN**

I heard they want to privatize everything, especially education, as a social planning tool to have students study only what's best for the corporation and allow those same corporations to decide who gets the opportunity to get an education and what they'll study to move up the social ladder or not.

**MR. ALBERT**

They want to charge for everything?

**MR. JOHNSON**

And control the curriculum.

**MR. DUGAN**

Since the conservative "Reagan Revolution," California schools have dropped from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 47<sup>th</sup> in per student spending and test scores have dropped similarly as funding resources for education and its traditional offerings have dried up.

**MR. DANIELS**

More spoils of the "Reagan Revolution."

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

Spoils is right. Not only was money taken away from our schools, sports, arts and music programs, but the same was done to our state mental hospital system, so they were closed down, and many of its patients were handed one-way bus tickets to right here in beautiful downtown San Francisco where we've had an army of homeless people living on our streets ever since. (*she begins to dance*) Look, I'm doing the SF Homeless dance. It looks like a funny Irish jig but I'm actually stepping over homeless people on the street. (*pretending*) Oh, there goes one. There's another. Don't want to land on 'em. They look bad and they smell worse.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Well, I'm glad to see you haven't gotten jaded over the situation, MS. RODRIGUEZ. Me, I'm still getting used to them. We have homeless people in New York of course but nothing like I've seen here in San Francisco.

**MS. NEILSEN**

Well, Reagan's gone now. Why can't someone just reopen those badly needed mental health facilities?

**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. RODRIGUEZ**

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. RODRIGUEZ**

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. RODRIGUEZ**

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. RODRIGUEZ**

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. RODRIGUEZ**

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

**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. RODRIGUEZ**

AIN'T THAT A BITCH?  
TAX THE RICH

**MR. JOHNSON, MR. DUGAN, MS. RODRIGUEZ**

SCHOOLS

MR. DANIELS, MR. ALBERT, MS. NEILSEN  
POOLS

MR. JOHNSON, MR. DUGAN, MS. RODRIGUEZ  
SCHOOLS

MR. DANIELS, MR. ALBERT, MS. NEILSEN  
POOLS

MR. JOHNSON, MR. DUGAN, MS. RODRIGUEZ  
SCHOOLS

MR. DANIELS, MR. ALBERT, MS. NEILSEN  
POOLS

MR. JOHNSON, MR. DUGAN, MS. RODRIGUEZ  
SCHOOLS

**ALL TEACHERS**

FOOLS!

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 school bells rings.*

**MR. DANIELS**

Well, it's that time again. Back in the box.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Our class is having their last day of class party today. If you have a chance, please stop by for some dim sum, papusas and piroshki.



**MS. NEILSEN**

If there's free food - you can count on Mr. Albert.

**MR. ALBERT**

Well, the students do always bring such delicious goodies.

**MS. NEILSEN**

And it is homemade.

**MR. DANIELS**

The students do know how to throw a party!

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

See you there.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Terrific! See you there.

*MR. JOHNSON exits.*

**MR. DUGAN**

That should be some party.

**MR. ALBERT**

It always is. Hmmm.

*HE eyes and grabs a doughnut  
from the table and opens his  
mouth wide.*

**MR. ALBERT (Continued)**

Down the hatch.

*(Blackout)*

## Act II Scene VI

Setting: Room 308

*At Rise: MR. JOHNSON is at his lectern as the STUDENTS begin to arrive to class with different dishes for the last day of school potluck party.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Just look at all this food. Is that green tea salad, I see, Sopanny? It looks delicious. Good morning class. I trust you all had a good weekend.

**STUDENTS**

*(in unison)*

Good morning, Teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Now class, listen up. I have good news for you. Having spent the entire weekend grading your tests, I am very happy to announce that all of you have passed your final examinations and all of you are to be promoted to the next level of study beginning next semester. Congratulations everyone.

*A wild cheer goes up among the STUDENTS as RICO struts proudly over to the classroom AUDIO PLAYER, pulls out an AUDIO TAPE from his pocket, inserts it into the machine and pushes the "play" button.*

*Dance music fills the air. While some of the STUDENTS take dance partners, others stand on the sidelines talking excitedly.*

*The music is soon silenced though as ROSETTA walks purposefully over to the AUDIO PLAYER and shuts it off.*

*RICO looks up.*

**RICO**

*(surprised)*

Huh? Que pasa?

*ROSETTA calls for the STUDENTS' attention.*

**ROSETTA**

Wait a minute, everybody. Wait a minute. Before the party begins, we have a small token of our appreciation we'd like to give for Mr. Johnson.

*The STUDENTS quiet down.*

**ROSETTA**

And to present the present...

*ROSETTA gestures to SOPANNY.*

**ROSETTA (Continued)**

Sopanny?

*With outstretched hands, SOPANNY steps forward to present a brightly colored package to MR. JOHNSON.*

**SOPANNY**

Mr. Johnson, this is from all of us. It's not much, but please accept it.

*MR. JOHNSON is genuinely surprised.*

**ROSETTA**

We love you, Mr. Johnson.

**RICO**

*(echoing)*

Yeah, we love you, Mr. Johnson. You're the best!

*The STUDENTS cheer as MR. JOHNSON stands before them clearly moved by this outpouring of affection. MEI LI cheers, too. The STUDENTS grow quiet as THEY wait for their teacher to speak.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Thank you, students. This is very kind of you... I did not expect this. (accepting the gift) Thank you, Sopanny.

**LAVONNA**

Open it teacher!

**NGUYEN TRAN**

Yeah, open it.

*All of the STUDENTS urge him to open the present. He does so and finds a plaque.*

**FANYA**

Read it, teacher.

**NGUYEN TRAN**

Yeah, read it.

**MR. JOHNSON**

It says, "BEST TEACHER AWARD" And of course there's no name - because you call me "Teacher"

*The STUDENTS laugh and cheer.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

And this card reads, "DEAR MR. JOHNSON, THANK YOU FOR TEACHING US! WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU" Signed, "YOUR FIRST CLASS AT ROOSEVELT JUNIOR HIGH"

*Beat as HE thinks of what to say next.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Thank you very much, class. And it was especially nice of you to mention that this is my first year teaching here at Roosevelt Junior High (or anywhere for that matter).

*THE STUDENTS laugh.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

They say a teacher never forgets their first class and certainly I will never forget you. It's been a real honor being your teacher this past semester. We've learned a lot together and I wish you all the best in your pursuit of the American Dream, whatever that may be for you. Remember to always study, be a lifelong learner and when you become a citizen, to vote. And then, you too, can contribute even more to this great bold social experiment that we call America.

*The STUDENTS cheer their teacher's remarks as MEI LI looks on admiringly.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

But enough of this. This should be a time of happiness. A time of celebration, even jubilation. This is your day!

*HE turns and motions to RICO.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Rico, turn up the music. Let's party!

*The STUDENTS while surprised at MR. JOHNSON's uncharacteristic use of the vernacular happily oblige him. RICO once again pushes the "play" button on the AUDIO PLAYER and the STUDENTS quickly find dance partners.*

*As MR. JOHNSON claps his hands in time to the music, HE is surprised to find MEI LI standing beside him.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Mei Li!

*MEI LI quickly casts her eyes downward seemingly unable to look directly at MR. JOHNSON.*

**MEI LI**

*(hesitant)*

Mr. Johnson... would you like to dance?

*MR. JOHNSON is startled at this proposal but thinks it harmless enough.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(gracious)*

Why, I'd love to.

*MEI LI's eyes seem to light up so it nearly causes MR. JOHNSON to blush. As the two begin to dance, RICO and ROSETTA look on. The RUSSIAN STUDENTS nod to each other knowingly.*

*Suddenly, in walk MR. WHITE and MS. BEASLEY followed by members of the SCHOOL BOARD and the TEACHERS.*

*Seeing the scene before them MR. WHITE and MS. BEASLEY turn to one another and smile. It is a sad smile, though.*

*Caught off guard, MR. JOHNSON motions to RICO to stop the music.*

*As it abruptly stops, the STUDENTS stand momentarily confused as MR. JOHNSON walks quickly across the room to greet his guests.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

*(somewhat flustered)*

Mr. White. Ms. Beasley. Members of the School Board. What a nice surprise. Won't you please join us?

**MR. WHITE**

I'm afraid we can't, Mr. Johnson. We've just told the other teachers and we thought we should tell you as well.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Tell me what?

*The STUDENTS are all ears. MR. WHITE comes quickly to the point.*

**MR. WHITE**

I've just received a call from the School Board ...

*HE motions to the SCHOOL BOARD.  
A tense silence fills the room.*

**MR. WHITE (Continued)**

In fact, members of the board are here with us now. You know School Board Members Lindsay, Walters and Primrose.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Yes, how do you do.

**MR. WHITE**

It seems that the pressure tactics of those who have long worked towards the closing of our school have proven successful. (beat)

**MR. WHITE (Continued)**

It is my sad duty to report to you that at the end of this semester, Roosevelt Junior High School is to be closed... forever.

*The STUDENTS gasp in unison.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(stunned)*

But that can't be. What will happen to our students? Where will they go? What will they do? How will they learn?

**SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER PRIMROSE**

Unfortunately, they won't, at least not here, now that the State Accreditation Commission has condemned this school.

**SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER LINDSAY**

Yes, we tried, but you know the story. The money just wasn't there.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Yes, I've heard that one before.

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

Ain't that a bitch. It's just union busting.

**SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER WALTERS**

Now, now. Let's not jump to conclusions.

*MR. WHITE can only shake his head.*

**MR. BEASLEY**

This can't be. This just can't be.

*MS. BEASLEY dabs her eyes with a tear-stained tissue and offers MR. WHITE her sympathies.*

**MR. WHITE**

There, there, Ms. Beasley.

*LAVONNA is disgusted.*

**LAVONNA**

Is (sic) like Russia again.



*The RUSSIAN STUDENTS nod as the other STUDENTS turn to discuss it among themselves.*

*RICO and ROSETTA walk over to where MR. JOHNSON is standing. Both offer comforting arms around their teacher's shoulders.*

**RICO**

*(sympathetically)*

It's okay, teacher.

*MR. JOHNSON places his own arm on the student's shoulder.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

I'm just sorry for all of you.

*VUONG ANH turns to NGUYEN TRAN.*

**VUONG ANH**

This no good for teacher.

*NGUYEN TRAN nods in agreement.*

**NGUYEN TRAN**

This no good for student, too.

*From across the room, JOSEF explodes in anger.*

**JOSEF**

I cannot believe that such things like this can happen here in America! In Russia, yes, but in America, no!

**ENRIQUE**

I don't know. I guess that such things sometimes do happen like this... even in America.

**JOSE**

*(disdainful)*

Humph. Such things do not surprise me.

*The full scope of the tragedy finally dawns upon SOPANNY who with frightened eyes turns to MR. JOHNSON for an answer.*

**SOPANNY**

But teacher ... what about next semester?

*MR. JOHNSON stoops down to eye-level with SOPANNY.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(kindly)*

I don't think there's going to be a next semester, Sopanny.

**LAVONNA**

*(bitterly)*

Or a year after that, if I am to understand the word "forever" correctly.

*VUONG ANH is philosophical.*

**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 THOUGH 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

**STUDENTS (Continued)**

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.*

**MR. WHITE**

*(slowly)*

Well, teachers. I suppose we'd better be getting back to our classrooms. Everyone has got a lot of work to do.

*HE turns to MS. BEASLEY.*

**MR. WHITE (Continued)**

Ms. Beasley. You come with me.

**MS. BEASLEY**

*(dabbing her eyes)*

Yes, Mr. White. (sniffles) You know I'll follow you always wherever you go.

*HE puts an affectionate arm around his faithful companion.*

**MR. WHITE**

*(sentimental)*

As I with you, Ms. Beasley. As I with you.

**MS. BEASLEY**

*(breaking down)*

I never thought it would end like this.

*SHE sobs into her tissue again as MR. WHITE escorts her from the room followed by (the) members of the SCHOOL BOARD.*

*The TEACHERS begin filing out. Each smiles and bids farewell to MR. JOHNSON as THEY exit.*

**MR. DANIELS**

Well, hang in there, Mr. Johnson. Don't let 'em get you down.

**MR. JOHNSON**

I won't, Mr. Daniels.

**MR. DUGAN**

You're still young. There'll be other jobs.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Thanks, Bill.

*MS. RODRIGUEZ offers her own  
final comment.*

**MS. RODRIGUEZ**

I knew this was gonna happen! Ain't this a bitch!

**MR. JOHNSON**

You said it, MS. RODRIGUEZ.

**MR. ALBERT**

This certainly is a rude way to end the semester. Not even cake and coffee?

*MS. NEILSEN looks on the bright  
side.*

**MS. NEILSEN**

Cheer up, people. It's always darkest before the dawn.

**MR. ALBERT**

Now how did I know you were going to say something cheery like that?

**MS. NEILSEN**

*(not taking the bait)*

Oh really, Mr. Albert. You don't always have to be such a fuddy duddy. (cheerful) Come on. I'll buy you a cheeseburger.

**MR. ALBERT**

*(surprised)*

Really? Well, that's very nice of you. Say, did I ever tell you how much I liked your hats?

**MS. NEILSEN**

*(taking his arm)*

You know, Clarence. I think there's hope for you yet.

*THEY* exit, their futures as uncertain as anyone's.

Now all of the *TEACHERS* have left. *MR. JOHNSON* looks out to his *STUDENTS*. *HE* is as nervous now as he was on the first day of class.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Well, class... this is it. I didn't expect our ending to be so abrupt and final, but... there you have it. It's over now and I suppose we'll just have to learn to live with it... at least for the time being. Who knows what tomorrow will bring.

**RICO**

But teacher, it's not fair.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Well, not everything always is, Rico. I'm sorry.

**ROSETTA**

Will we ever see you again, teacher?

**MR. JOHNSON**

Oh, I expect so... I'll probably be around for a while... Then I suppose it's back to the old job interview game, (with tongue in cheek) which is a fun one, too, I'm sure you can imagine...

*The STUDENTS groan.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

... and where that'll lead me, I don't know. I can only hope that it's someplace half as nice as here.

*The students smile.*

*As the final BELL RINGS, MR. JOHNSON tries to muster up a final smile in return for his students.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Alright now, class. It's time. Gather up your belongings. Don't forget anything. You'd hate to lose your textbooks on the last day of school. Incidentally, the office will probably remain open for the next few weeks while final preparations are being made for the closing of the school, so if you need anything before that time...

*HE turns wistful at the thought.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

You know it's funny. It probably took years to build a place like this. But with one quick vote it's over and soon, it's all going to be gone.

*The STUDENTS turn sober at this thought and quietly gather up their belongings.*

*MR. JOHNSON takes his place behind his desk as STUDENTS pass by to bid their final farewells.*

*RICO and ROSETTA approach first. RICO extends his hand to MR. JOHNSON who stands.*

**RICO**

Goodbye, teacher. Take care of yourself.

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(shaking hands)*

You too, Rico. Take good care of Rosetta.

**ROSETTA**

Oh, don't worry, teacher. (grinning at RICO) He will.

*THEY smile at one another. ENRIQUE and JOSE approach next.*

**ENRIQUE**

Gracias, teacher.



**MR. JOHNSON**

Thank you, Enrique. I hope things work out for you.

**ENRIQUE**

I will try my best to see that they do, teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON**

I know you will, Enrique. You are a hard worker. It was a pleasure having you in my class. Good luck.

*ENRIQUE smiles.*

**JOSE**

*(mischievous)*

Break a leg, teacher. Thank you for everything. You stay out of trouble, eh?

*JOSE offers the  
thumbs-up sign.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Oh, I'll try. You too, eh Jose?

**JOSE**

You know it, teacher.

*MR. JOHNSON returns the thumbs-up sign to JOSE who exits wearing a satisfied smile.*

*LAVONNA and the RUSSIAN STUDENTS approach next.*

**LAVONNA**

Thank you, Mr. Johnson... for everything.

**MR. JOHNSON**

You're welcome, Lavonna. It was a pleasure having you in my class. Keep up with your studies.

**LAVONNA**

I will.

*HE turns to FANYA.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Goodbye Fanya.

*FANYA grabs MR. JOHNSON tightly  
by the arm.*

**FANYA**

*(her voice breaking)*

Mr. Johnson, you are a teacher from G-d.

*MR. JOHNSON is taken aback by  
the high words of praise.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Well... thank you, Fanya. That's a very nice thing to say...

*MR. JOHNSON turns to JOSEF.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

Goodbye Josef. I hope you have found yourself this past year.

**JOSEF**

I have, teacher. Thanks to you.

*The two men smile at each other.  
MR. JOHNSON turns to VLADIMIR  
who has been standing silently  
off to one side. The big man  
sniffles loudly and then without  
warning wraps MR. JOHNSON in a  
massive Russian bear hug.*

**VLADIMIR**

*(emotional)*

Spasiba, Teacher. Spasiba.

*Released from VLADIMIR's vice-like grip MR. JOHNSON tries desperately to regain his breath.*

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(coughing)*

You're welcome, Vladimir. You're welcome.

**VLADIMIR**

Dosvedanya, teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Goodbye, Vladimir.

*MR. JOHNSON bids a final farewell to his RUSSIAN STUDENTS.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Goodbye to you all. Best wishes in America.

*The last group of students, VUONG ANH, NGUYEN TRAN and SOPANNY approach. NGUYEN TRAN speaks.*

**VUONG ANH**

Thank you, teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Thank you, Nguyen Tran.

**SOPANNY**

We will never forget you, teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Nor I you, Sopanny.

*SOPANNY tries hard to hold back her tears but cannot.*

**SOPANNY**

*(breaking down)*

Oh, teacher.

*SHE runs out of the room in distress as the others look on.*

**NGUYEN TRAN**

She's (a) very emotional girl, teacher.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Yes, she is, Tran.

**NGUYEN TRAN**

Maybe I go see if she okay.

**MR. JOHNSON**

That sounds like a fine idea, Tran. Why don't you go see if she's alright.

*NGUYEN TRAN starts after her but suddenly stops in his tracks. HE turns around slowly and looks up at MR. JOHNSON for the last time, wanting to say something.*

**NGUYEN TRAN**

You know... you still number one teacher, Mr. Johnson.

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(chuckling)*

Thank you, Tran. And you are still number one student, too, I'm sure.

*NGUYEN TRAN smiles once more at MR. JOHNSON before darting from the classroom.*

*VUONG ANH remains and stands respectfully before his teacher. His words seem almost rehearsed, yet they are genuine.*

**VUONG ANH**

*(humbly)*

I would like to thank you teacher from the bottom of my heart. You have been (a) very excellent teacher for all of us. I will miss you and wish you many good happinesses for your future.

*HE looks off to one side and observes MEI LI standing quietly near MR. JOHNSON's desk.*

**VUONG ANH (Continued)**

I am sure it will be a bright one for you, sir.

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(solemn)*

Thank you, Vuong Anh. I, too, wish you the brightest of futures... Good luck in all of your future endeavors.

*VUONG ANH bows respectfully to his teacher who bows in return. MEI LI, too, bows to VUONG ANH who bows to her and MR. JOHNSON once again before exiting and closing the classroom door behind him leaving the two alone. An empty silence fills the room.*

**MR. JOHNSON (Continued)**

Well, Mei Li. I guess this is it. Have you got any plans for next year?

**MEI LI**

I... I... nothing special.

**MR. JOHNSON**

Well, something will come up, I'm sure. Is there anything special that you plan to do during the break?

**MEI LI**

*(stammering)*

I... I... (then blurting out) I'd like to go to Golden Gate Park... with you... if I... if you... if we could...

**MR. JOHNSON**

*(surprised)*

Well, that is a little unusual, Mei Li, and I don't think the school would approve but since there is no school anymore, I suppose it wouldn't hurt if we took the bus to Golden Gate Park to visit the DeYoung Museum which I hear has a new art exhibit that's supposed to be very good, we could grab some coffee and cake afterwards and maybe catch a show. You never know. How does that sound?

**MEI LI**

Like an American Dream come true, Teacher... in America.

*MR. JOHNSON holds open the door for MEI LI. Together, THEY step up from the classroom into a new tomorrow.*