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# KHAMASEEN

BY

TOM COASH

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# KHAMASEEN

by Tom Coash

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

DONNA; *an American, 25-35 years old, married to Pete*

PETE; *also American, 30-40 years old, works for Oil Company in Egypt*

HELWA; *female Egyptian, 20-25 years old, maid*

ROZ; *an American expatriate living in Cairo, 30-40 years of age*

BRIGITTE; *French, Wives Club Member, 25-45 years old*

DR. MANLEY; *male, American self-help book author*

SHEIHK; *played by Dr. Manley actor, Egyptian*

BOATMAN; *played by Dr. Manley actor, Egyptian*

TAMMY; *American, Wives Club Member (Pregnant)*

MIMI; *American, Wives Club Member*

RUDE MAN/WAITER; *male, age 18-40*

NURSE; *played by Mimi actor, Egyptian*

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH; *on "Tape" but seen live; played by Brigitte actor*

TELEGRAM VOICE OVER

OPTIONAL DANCERS

## TIME

*The Present*

## SETTING

*An expatriate flat in Cairo and a chic restaurant. I envision the set being built mainly out of travel trunks which transition to form various pieces of furniture. Also a bed. The furniture is covered by large drop clothes and dustcovers at the start which are removed by maid and other characters as the play goes along.*

## ETC.

*The Arabic words in the script are spelled out phonetically. The definitions and a pronunciation guide follow at the end. Although there are a number of Arabic words, they are easy to learn with a little practice particularly with the aid of an Arabic speaker.*

# KHAMASEEN

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## ACT I SCENE 1

*(AT RISE: the call to prayer is heard softly cutting through the preshow music as VISUAL EFX: slides of Cairo, are projected onstage or against the proscenium wall. The Preshow MUSIC FADES; call to prayer continues softly as SOUND EFX of an early morning wind until the sound of the wind drowns out the call to prayer. The slides now play across the still darkened stage illuminating DONNA, who is vacuuming in the dark. All that is visible is the light from the bottom of the vacuum. In the background the sound of the wind continues with the sound of the vacuum. PETE enters wearing boxer shorts. LIGHTS UP as PETE turns on a light revealing a large dustcover blanketing unknown furniture. The dustcover, as it spreads over the furniture and onto the floor is reminiscent of sand dunes, pyramids and tents. SFX: wind may occasionally flutter this cloth. DONNA is vacuuming under as well as on top of the dust cover; SHE ignores PETE.)*

PETE

Donna! *(Louder)* Donnnnaaa! Hey!

*(DONNA does not respond. PETE unplugs the vacuum; DONNA looks at PETE.)*

PETE, *Continues*

What are you doing?

DONNA

It's the khamaseen. It's come.

PETE

It's four in the morning.

DONNA

There's so much dust. It's everywhere.

PETE

The maid's coming at eight.

DONNA

I don't want her to think we're slob.

PETE

Come to bed.

DONNA

There's a lot of dust.

I've got a meeting tomorrow.

PETE

I know. I'm sorry.

DONNA

Come to bed.

PETE

I couldn't sleep.

DONNA

Mummy tummy?

PETE

No.

DONNA

What then?

PETE

(Pause) I dreamt about it again.

DONNA

Donut, you can't keep doing this.

PETE

I'm sorry.

DONNA

Honey, it was ten years ago.

PETE

I can't help it! It just seems so real.

DONNA

Take one of your pills.

PETE

People were running and screaming. And I saw this boy, this Egyptian boy! Running and crying. He was covered with white dust and crying...like he was lost...like he had lost something...frantic...tears running down his cheeks; white tracks...and I was there...

DONNA

You need to sleep, I need to sleep.

PETE

DONNA

I was vacuuming.

PETE

I know.

DONNA

In my dream! I was vacuuming in my dream...trying to vacuum it all up. I know, you think I'm stupid!

PETE

I didn't say that.

DONNA

Tears running down my face, splattering on the hose, on the bag. People watching me. Staring at me. All crowding around, pointing.

PETE

Maybe you should have sold tickets.

*(DONNA looks at PETE, then sits on the couch wrapping the dust-cover around her.)*

PETE, *Continues*

I'm sorry....I'm just tired.

DONNA

Then in the dream I woke up, you know? I thought I was awake but I was still dreaming. Everything was so quiet...still. Thick yellow dust blowing into our room. Covering the floor and dresser and chair. A clock ticking somewhere.

PETE

The clock's still ticking.

DONNA

Dust on the bed, the pillows...you, me. In my eyes, my nose...my mouth. And I couldn't move! I couldn't breathe!

PETE

Honey, nobody's going to attack you.

DONNA

Like we were in a grave!

PETE

It's completely safe here.

DONNA

It was so weird. Like they had taken me apart. All my bones. Like that pharaoh's boat buried in the sand next to the pyramid. All the separate pieces. Spars, oars, ribs, tendons. They had buried me...there next to you...only we were in the bed. A boat-bed. And the people were there...whispering and watching. I wanted to get up but I couldn't. The dust pouring in. Burying me, burying us.

PETE

Darling, sweetheart, love bucket.

DONNA

What?

PETE

*(Pause)* We agreed about the maid...Remember?

DONNA

You agreed.

PETE

She's just a maid, not a suicide bomber.

DONNA

At least she won't think we're slobs.

PETE

It's four A.M.

DONNA

You have to work.

PETE

Come to bed. *(DONNA holds her stomach.)* Mummy tummy?

DONNA

It's not mummy tummy!

PETE

*(Pause)* Are you doing this to somehow punish me? *(DONNA shakes her head "no.")* Why did you have the lights out?

DONNA

I didn't want to wake you.

PETE

Donna, I'm trying.

DONNA

I know.

PETE

It's a different world here. A different place. You'll get used to it.

DONNA

I know.

PETE

I love you.

DONNA

I know.

PETE

*(Pause)* I really don't want to come back out here.

DONNA

No.

*(PETE looks at DONNA who doesn't look up then exits. The call to prayer is heard faintly in the distance once again. LIGHTS DIM. The SHEIKH enters dressed in a simple white galabeya. HE unrolls his prayer rug, kneels and begins to silently pray. DONNA watches for a moment then huddles deeper into the dustcover. BLACKOUT.)*

## ACT I; SCENE 2

*(AT RISE: DONNA, MIMI, BRIGITTE and TAMMY, who is quite pregnant, are at a meeting of the Natural Gas Wives.)*

MIMI

Welcome, welcome, welcome to Cairo, as you'll probably hear 1000 times a day here in the friendliest city in the Middle East. And especially, welcome to the Natural Gas Wives. Our newcomers membership drive is going extremely well, although some of us are going about it in a different way. Isn't that right Tammy?

*(TAMMY happily rubs her stomach; the OTHERS giggle.)*

TAMMY

Yes ma'am and I'd like to take a moment to introduce you all to our newest newcomer, just two weeks in Cairo...Donna Peters! Up, up, up Donna! *(Encourages DONNA to stand)* Donna's husband is with Western Resources Oil & Natural Gas. Here to help with the flack from Iraq! He has an engineering degree from the U of T. Go Longhorns! Most recently with Dallas Oil & Gas, he was last year's "Employee of the year". A real go-getter. You all give a big welcome to...uh...Donna!



*(The WIVES give DONNA a polite round of applause similar to what might be heard at a golf match.)*

BRIGITTE

Now, for you newcomer kawagas there are a few little things we think you should be aware of. Ready girls? We call this our list of "The 35 most important don'ts" for women in the Middle-East.

MIMI

Number one...Don't ever...

TAMMY

Ever...

BRIGITTE

Ever...

ALL

Touch the Nile!

MIMI

Don't drink the water!

TAMMY

Don't eat the food!

BRIGITTE

Don't breathe the air!

MIMI

Don't wear clothes that show your arms.

TAMMY

Or your legs.

BRIGITTE

Or your breasts.

MIMI

Don't talk to taxi drivers.

TAMMY

Don't make eye contact with men in the street.

BRIGITTE

Unless it's Omar Sharif. *(Giggles)*

Don't pet dogs. MIMI

Or cats. TAMMY

Or children. BRIGITTE

I'd like everybody to know that I had a terrible personal experience with shrimps!  
*(The WIVES advance on DONNA talking faster.)*

And doormen. BRIGITTE

And maids. TAMMY

Our maid drinks our booze! MIMI

Our maid steals our food! TAMMY

Our ex-maid was trying on my Dolce and Gabbana silk blouse! BRIGITTE

We had to send ours to Mecca! TAMMY

We had to get ours out of jail! MIMI

We had to buy ours new teeth! *(Tapping her own perfect, white teeth)* BRIGITTE

Don't go to coffeehouses. MIMI

Don't go to bars. TAMMY

Don't go to public toilettes without le tissue. BRIGITTE

Or in a bus. MIMI

Or on a train. TAMMY

Or on a camel. BRIGITTE

*(The WIVES talk faster; almost surrealistic.)*

Don't travel alone! MIMI

Don't travel in groups! TAMMY

Don't go near the embassy! BRIGITTE

Or the mosques! MIMI

Or the airport. TAMMY

Don't open your windows. BRIGITTE

Or open your doors. TAMMY

Or go outside at all... MIMI

ALL  
During the Kamseen! *(Mispronounced three different ways)*

MIMI  
Now then, any questions?

DONNA  
What's a kawaga?

*(The WIVES giggle.)*

TAMMY

Why foreigner—it means you're a foreigner!

*(The WIVES giggle all the more. HELWA enters into a dimly lit area of the stage that represents DONNA'S apartment. BRIGITTE signals to DONNA.)*

BRIGITTE

Psssst!

*(BRIGITTE points to HELWA who is pulling things out of a big box of cleaning supplies next to the vacuum cleaner. LIGHTS CROSSFADE to HELWA as DONNA crosses to her.)*

### ACT I; SCENE 3

*(DONNA is conscious of the WIVES watching her as THEY remain dimly lit in the background, though not part of HELWA'S awareness. The trunk beside HELWA is crammed with cleaning supplies that DONNA has brought from the United States. DONNA takes a can of Pledge from HELWA.)*

DONNA

Pledge. Lemon pledge! It's American.

HELWA

Yes Madame.

*(DONNA pulls supplies from the box, explaining their purpose.)*

DONNA

For cleaning...Clorox...Comet...Comfort...Dove...

HELWA

Yes, Madame.

DONNA

*(Glancing at WIVES)* And this is Extra, extra, extra, extra-strength Endust.

*(DONNA sprays Endust to demonstrate; HELWA wipes it up.)*

HELWA

Yes, yes, yes, Madame.

*(The WIVES laugh.)*

DONNA

*(Slightly disturbed)* Fantastic for the kitchen. Glory. Ajax, Brillo, Lysol. Mr. Clean, stronger than dirt!

HELWA

In shah Allah, Madame.

BRIGITTE

*(Mimics; stage whisper)* In shah allah Madame!

*(The WIVES laugh as THEY cross into DONNA and HELWA'S space. DONNA sees them; HELWA does not. The WIVES run their fingers over objects looking for dust; inspecting furniture, knick-knacks, etc. DONNA reacts to their presence but does not interact with them.)*

DONNA

*(To HELWA, trying to ignore wives)* I brought a lot of stuff with me because I wasn't sure you could get them here. Scotch-brite, Scotch-brand, Scotch-guard. Spray and Wash, Silvo, Brasso. Windex. Tidybowl. Do you speak English?

HELWA

A little, Madame.

TAMMY

*(Mimicking)* A little Madame.

DONNA

Do you know Tidybowl? *(Holds up Tidybowl and a toilet brush)* For you know. In the bathroom?

HELWA

Tayib. ["OK" in Arabic]

DONNA

*(Louder and slower)* Ti-dee.

HELWA

Ta-yib.

DONNA

Ti-deee!

HELWA

Yes Madame.

*(The WIVES laugh, delighted at the confusion.)*

DONNA

Oh boy...And then for the laundry there's Tide, Downy, and Shout. For stains. Before you put the laundry in. *(Mimes scrubbing to get a stain out)* If there's a stain? Shout it out...that's the commercial. Right. Right?

HELWA

Tayib, Madame.

MIMI

*(Mimicking)* Tayib Madame, tayib Madame.

DONNA

*(Flustered)* And then if your hands get chapped, I've got Oil of Olay, Body Milk, Mary Kay, or Vaseline Intensive Care. Have you ever been in intensive care?

HELWA

*(Not understanding)* Il Ham-du lil-leh.

DONNA

Mop...broom...squeegee thing; feather duster, dustpan...and hand-towels and...face towels...and...

TAMMY

*(Whispering loudly)* ...and dish-towels and towel-towels.

DONNA

*(Becoming increasingly manic)* Shelf paper, toilet paper, paper towels, paper bags, paper napkins, cloth napkins...sanitary napkins? *(WIVES laugh, delighted)* Flashlights. Candles. Matches...and... *(HELWA pulls out a large roll of red duct tape)*...duct tape!

*(DONNA grabs the duct tape, pulls some loose, and gets a bit tangled in it. The WIVES begin to drift back to their seats.)*

MIMI

Don't open your windows!

TAMMY

Don't open your doors!

DONNA

...In case of...you know...emergencies!

HELWA

Yes, Madame.

BRIGITTE

Don't go outside!

WIVES

During the Kamseen... *(Echoing)* Kamseen...Kamseen...Kamseen...

DONNA

*(Trying to rid herself of the tape)* That ought to do it, hunh?

HELWA

Yes, Madame!

DONNA

Do you know how to use the vacuum? Do you know I vacuumed all night so you wouldn't think we're slob? And polished the table three times? And waxed the floor? And scrubbed the walls until my knuckles bled? Do you know that I live in a vacuum? That I gave up my family to come here. My friends. My job. That a taxi driver put his hand on my leg. That a man calls this phone and says "I am make love you!" Dogs bark at me. The soldiers with their guns stare at me. We get e-mails everyday from the embassy that terrify me! Blue alert, orange alert, red alert! I don't even know what that means. Am I 'sposed to run? Hide? Use the duct tape? Scream my head off? What?! The Hamas have an office on the top floor of this building! Do you know that? Do you? What color should that be?! Flaming vermillion!?! Do you have any idea at all what I'm saying?

HELWA

Il ham-du lil-leh.

DONNA

(Pause) Ill what?

HELWA

Your house very clean Madame.

*(HELWA goes right to work removing the sticky tape from DONNA. SHE puts the cleaning supplies back in the trunk, takes off the various dustcovers, folds them and takes them away. LIGHTS FADE on apartment as TAMMY claps her hands, bringing DONNA back to the Natural Gas Wives meeting.)*

## ACT I; SCENE 4

*(LIGHTS RESTORE on the WIVES CLUB meeting as DONNA crosses back to its space.)*

TAMMY

Announcements, annoooooouncements...I'm afraid there's some rather disappointing news. The Annual Lawrence of Arabia Camel Ride and Galabeya Party is being postponed due to the khamaseen. *(Mispronounced kam-seen; Appropriate moans)* I know, I know. To be rescheduled when the dust settles, so keep the sequins shiny on all those cute little belly-dancing outfits. And finally, drum roll please...the new "I survived the khamaseen" *(Again mispronounced)* T-shirts are here! Modeled by our very own French fashion queen, Brigitte.

*(BRIGITTE does a bit of a strip tease revealing that SHE is wearing the new t-shirt, modeling the shirt as if SHE was on a fashion runway. The WIVES respond in appropriate exclamations of delight. ROZ enters and watches from the side.)*

TAMMY, *Continued*

To advertise the upcoming "End of the Khamaseen (*Mispronounced*) Spring Cleaning Charity Sale" all you desert foxes will be styling and profiling in these cool, crisp, all Egyptian cotton tees! Whether riding your favorite dromedary or relaxing under a beach umbrella at Sharm these flatteringly tailored "amees" [shirts] give a look of casual, windswept elegance. Designed especially for the Natural Gas Wives they come in all sizes including maternity. (*To BRIGITTE*) Thank you Brigitte. Choice of colors include Dusty Pink, Desert Sage, and my favorite...Sultry Sirocco! (*To BRIGITTE who continues to model, enjoying the spotlight*) I said thank you Brigitte. Absolutely de rigueur, ladies, for those... (*To BRIGITTE*) MERCI BEAUCOUP! (*BRIGITTE finally sits*)...as I was saying de rigueur for all those working at the End of the Kamseen Sale. Only ten dollars each and...

ROZ

(*Pronouncing it correctly*) Khamaseen!

TAMMY

What?

ROZ

It's pronounced khamaseen.

TAMMY

Oh.

ROZ

Get it right! Next you'll be saying we live in Kay-ro.

(*There is an embarrassed pause.*)

MIMI

(*Embarrassed laugh; explaining...*) Roz is our resident Arabic expert!

(*DONNA reacts with a tentative laugh. BRIGITTE responds with a disapproving clucking of her tongue.*)

TAMMY

Why, thank you...

BRIGITTE

Incroyable.

TAMMY

...Roz.

MIMI

Almost a native!



TAMMY

Only ten dollars each...

*(TAMMY pauses as SHE struggles for the correct pronunciation.)*

ROZ

Khamaseen.

TAMMY

Right. Sale. On the 29th of this month. All proceeds going to The Indignant Women of NigeriaSyriaSomaliaSudanIraqIranAfghanistanPakistanYemen...

MIMI

*(Urgent whisper over Tammy's line)* Indigent!

TAMMY

...AlgeriaChad... *(Annoyed whisper)* What?

MIMI

*(Whisper)* Indigent!

TAMMY

*(Looks worriedly at the card in her hand)* Indigent! *(Embarrassed giggle)* The Indigent Women of NigeriaSyriaSomaliaSudan...uh...IraqIran...Afghanistan...etc! And now to introduce today's honored guest...

BRIGITTE

Mais oui! The Natural Gas Wives are very excited to have with us today a tres special guest. Traveling in ze Middle-East to speak about his best-selling new book "Burning Burkas or Salome Revealed!" Dr. Andrew Manley!

*(DR. MANLEY enters and strides forward. HE has the mannerisms of a daytime talk show host but believes in what he is saying and selling.)*

MANLEY

Merci beaucoup Madame! Ahlan wa sahan! Thank you, thank you. You're probably looking at me thinking "Why do we need another man telling us what do? Why is he even here?" In four words...Nile cruise...tax write-off. *(Pause)* Joke Ladies! Just a joke! No, I'm here today to talk to you ladies of the Levant about what you need to know to survive this dangerous but exciting moment in the Middle-East. I'm not going to tell you to burn veils or buy flack jackets. I'm not going to spout meaningless catch-words or catch-phrases. What I'd like to share with you can be summed up in just one word; Self-esteem! Something we don't often consciously think about, yet affects everything we do. Think about it. Are you going to interview for that exciting new job position? Self-esteem plays a role. Are you going to call that guy with the great buns for a date? Have that piece of delicious cheesecake? Assert yourself with your husband's other wives? Joke, ladies! Joke. But self-esteem is not a joke. Are you just going to sit around the house and wonder why your life seems empty? Self-esteem. *(Points at BRIGITTE)* Do you have it?!

Moi?  
BRIGITTE

(Points at ROZ) Do you?  
MANLEY

ROZ  
Is Manley your real name or a stage name?

MANLEY  
(Ignoring her and pointing to DONNA) What about you? Do you have self-esteem?

DONNA  
(Looking at her lap) No.

MANLEY  
Thank you. There's an honest answer. Let's give her a hand. Self-esteem. When I look around this city I see women hidden behind veils of cloth. When I look around this room, I see women hiding behind invisible veils of their own creation. Did you know the Arabic word for veil is hijab...curtain. Like the curtain at the end of a play. And when the curtain comes down, the show is over. Think about it. What did Salome know that you don't? What did she think as she was dropping that seventh veil? Do you like who you see when you look in the mirror? Do you give in to your husband to avoid confrontation? Spend every waking hour living up to somebody else's expectations? Of course you do. Why? I'll tell you in two words...Impression Management! It's not a catch-phrase. It's what you do when you're not being true to yourself. Trying to stage-manage the impression you make on people in order to win their approval. Playing roles. Happy homemaker, chauffeur, cleaning woman, sex kitten? Hiding the real you. Even if you win their approval you've lost your own by not being honest with yourself. To put it simply, as I do in my new book, "Burning Burkas", if you don't like your self...nobody will. Impression Management. Let's try something. I'd like to try something. Close your eyes. Close your eyes and think vividly about what I've said. Go ahead. Good. Now silently fill in the ending to this sentence..."There's a secret I haven't told anyone."  
"There's a secret I haven't told anyone..."

(The GROUP freezes in time and space and the LIGHTS DIM.)

## ACT I; SCENE 5

(PETE enters and grabs DONNA'S arm, dragging her away as SHE recalls a recent party THEY attended.)

PETE  
Come on! We're going!

DONNA  
Hey!

*(PETE drags DONNA across the stage to their bed, set in the area of the stage representing their apartment. LIGHTS RISE on the area as THEY enter the space.)*

Hurry up! PETE

What's the matter? DONNA

What do you think's the matter! PETE

We just got here! DONNA

And now we're leaving. PETE

You're hurting me! Pete, you're hurting me! DONNA

Oh, am I? PETE

Ow! Ow! Stop it! DONNA

*(PETE throws DONNA on the bed. SHE scootches up in the bed away from him, clutching a pillow to her chest as protection.)*

I'll stop it. You bet I'll stop it! PETE

What's wrong with you? DONNA

Next time we go to a party! PETE

What!?! DONNA

That guy! PETE

What guy? DONNA

That guy you were hanging all over. PETER

No... DONNA

That's what I'm talking about! PETER

Pete, no... DONNA

I saw you! PETER

Don't do this. DONNA

Me? You! PETER

Please... DONNA

Make me look like a putz. PETER

I was just talking to him. DONNA

Yeah, right! PETER

It's the first person I've talked to since we've been here! DONNA

I didn't know you were so lonely! PETER

He was just somebody standing next to the Ritz crackers! DONNA

Yeah? PETER

You weren't talking to me! DONNA

PETE

If you liked him so much why didn't you just go home with him?

DONNA

Maybe I should have.

PETE

What?

DONNA

Better than coming home to this!

PETE

Think so? Yeah?

DONNA

*(As HE stalks her)* Don't.

PETE

Maybe you're right.

DONNA

Don't. I'm sorry. It was nothing.

PETE

*(Grabbing pillow away from DONNA)* I can't seem to make you happy.

DONNA

Pete...

PETE

*(Pushes her down on bed)* I try to...

DONNA

*(Pulling away)* Ow! That hurts!

PETE

*(Hitting her hard with the pillow; not playful)* ...make you happy.

DONNA

Ow! *(Frightened)* Stop it.

*(PETE continues hitting DONNA with the pillow, deliberately— not in a frenzy; not playful— teaching her a “lesson.”)*

PETE

I try... *(Hit)* ...to do the right thing.



MANLEY

"There's a secret I haven't told anyone..." Ok open your eyes. Take a deep breath but don't lose that thought. Hold tight onto that thought and ask yourself, "Have I been living a lie? Been honest with my friends? Honest with myself? Hiding behind a veil?"

*(The WIVES open their eyes. DONNA looks into lap.)*

ROZ

Do you use Dial? Don't you wish everybody did?

MIMI  
Ssshhh!

TAMMY  
Roz!

MANLEY

You know...Roz is it? Pretty name. Roz, you know that cynicism is considered by many to be a sign of the inability to cope.

TAMMY

You're not funny Roz!

BRIGITTE

Some people are very interested in le doctor.

MIMI

What will Dr. Manley think?

ROZ

Oh no!

BRIGITTE

Dr., I have a secret desire...

MANLEY

Ladies...

BRIGITTE

A secret fantasy... *(Fondles DR. MANLEY'S tie)*

MANLEY

Ladies! *(Looking at DONNA)* I think there is somebody who has something to share. Perhaps something she doesn't feel good about. *(Touches DONNA'S shoulder)* I think there's something you haven't told anyone.

DONNA

*(Looks up and around; takes a moment)* I'm pregnant.

*(In the distance is heard the soft sound effect of HELWA doing a traditional Egyptian woman's ululation of rejoicing. MUSIC UP. DR. MANLEY pats DONNA'S shoulder and exits. The WIVES surround DONNA, congratulating and dressing her in one of the T-shirts; sort of as a booby prize. THEY exit each striking (taking) the chair on which they had been seated, all except DONNA; ROZ a little slower than the others. DONNA sits for a moment in a diminishing pool of light.)*

## ACT I; SCENE 7

*(DONNA rises from her chair. LIGHTS RISE with the SFX: the sounds of the Nile River. SHE crosses towards the Nile, looking out upon it. The RUDE MAN enters and sees DONNA by the river. HE strikes the remaining chair then saunters towards her. HE hisses at her to get her attention. When SHE looks, HE blows her a rude kiss. DONNA turns and scoots away from him. The RUDE MAN crosses behind her and calls to her in a loud under-tone.)*

RUDE MAN

Asal!...Asal...

*(DONNA looks at him uncomfortably. The RUDE MAN grabs his crotch suggestively. Shocked, SHE jumps up and rushes home.)*

RUDE MAN

*(Calling after her)* Asal...!

*(Disappointed, the RUDE MAN, starts to exit but sees a woman in the audience and blows kisses to her. The SHEIHK enters behind and watches his antics. DONNA looks back and see the RUDE MAN still watching her. HE blows another kiss and SHE looks away. The RUDE MAN looks up and sees the SHEIHK. Startled, HE hurries off.)*

## ACT I; SCENE 8

*(DONNA angrily sits in her apartment and removes her t-shirt. PETE enters, very excited, pushing a baby stroller loaded with an ample amount of baby paraphernalia. HE circles DONNA with the stroller making various car/traffic noises, as if HE were driving a car.)*

PETE

Vroom, vroom! Honk, honk! Hey, good looking! Check it out! *(No response; rounding a corner)* EEEEEUUUURRRRRRR...

DONNA

Pete...

PETE

This baby's got it all! *(Does a wheelie with the stroller)* WhooHooo! *(Bumps Donna with stroller)*



DONNA

Stop!

PETE

EEEERRRTTTT!

(PETE “slams on the brakes” and begins making appropriate backing up beeping noises.)

PETE, *Continued*

Beep, beep, beep, beep... (*Sits on bed; plays with baby things*) Wait till you see this stuff...

DONNA

Listen...

PETE

The other Mommies are gonna be committing jealousiiiiide. (*Takes baby items out of stroller, shows them to DONNA, plays with them*) Man, I went to that store, you know, that has all the Egyptian baby stuff. And it hit me! We're having a baby. I mean, it never really hit me before. It was overwhelming. There was just so much...baby...stuff!

DONNA

We need to talk...

PETE

Egyptians love babies! There's this great feeling between you and the salesgirls. You're excited, so they get excited. Then you're more excited 'cause they're excited that you're excited. The whole store's going totally bonkers picking out stuff for you.

DONNA

Have you ever felt like you were in the wrong life?

PETE

(*Shows her a goofy baby item*) Nice, eh?!

DONNA

I mean it.

PETE

What are you talking about?

DONNA

I feel like I've gotten on the wrong train or taken a wrong turn somewhere.

PETE

Are you even listening to what I'm saying?

DONNA

Serious wrong turn.

PETE

I love you madly! We're having a baby! (*Displaying baby stuff*) We've got a stroller...a bath thing..a rocker thing—wait, I love this... (*Shows her something that makes funny noises*)  
Cute, huh?

DONNA

Pete...I want to go home.

PETE

Come on Donut, be happy with me.

DONNA

Back to my family.

PETE

We have a family. Here... (*Tries to touch her belly; SHE pulls away*)

DONNA

Don't.

PETE

Honey, we agreed! This is where the action is! We stick it out in the Middle-East for a couple years and we have enough to send the kid to Harvard in a Hummer. Mission accomplished.

DONNA

I want to go home.

PETE

You haven't even given this place a chance.

DONNA

What is it you want from me?

PETE

Maybe if you'd try a little harder.

DONNA

It'll be different in Cairo you said.

PETE

The crib's great. Wait till you see it.

DONNA

But nothing's changed.

PETE

One thing's changed. We now have the baddest stroller on the Corniche!

DONNA

Listen to me!

PETE

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Come here... (*Tries to embrace her; SHE fends him off*) Donna, come on. I know you're unhappy. I'm sorry. It will get better, I promise.

DONNA

But it doesn't.

PETE

Be logical, it's not America. We're not used to it. We've both been a little flipped out. A place like Cairo takes a little adjustment. I mean just the traffic.

DONNA

It's not the traffic!

PETE

It's culture shock. Everything's strange. You're pregnant, you're tired, you don't feel well, you're hormonal. But it'll get better. It's just all part of the deal.

DONNA

Yeah? How 'bout this as part of the deal? (*Flips him off and walks away*)

PETE

Hey! (*Following her*) Hey I said!

DONNA

What?

PETE

Don't just walk away from me.

DONNA

What? You gonna hit me again? Is that part of the deal too?

PETE

You think I like this? Open the front door of my home sweet home, and wham, it's like Desert Storm Part Two. I said I was sorry!

DONNA

You were suffocating me!

PETE

I'm sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry! What else can I say?

DONNA

You said it would never happen again!

PETE

Ok, I screwed up! It's done. It's over. Why do we have to keep going on about it?!

DONNA

I'm scared of you! Is that hormonal! I'm scared of you. I'm scared of this place. I don't know how to get help. I don't even know how to call the police!

PETE

Oh, that's great. Call the police!

DONNA

I'm scared of the police!!

PETE

That makes me feel real good. Might as well have "monster" tattooed on my forehead!

DONNA

I'm ten thousand miles from anyone I know.

PETE

This morning I'm sitting at my desk and I feel like I'm gonna cry. Me. At work! That's the way to get ahead at the office, huh. Start bawling. Hey Pete, what's the matter? Oh gosh, sorry, nothing really. I've just been beating my wife and now I feel like a total shithead.

DONNA

Pete...

PETE

That's why I went to that baby store. That's why I got all this! I want to make it up to you. How? How do I do that?

DONNA

I don't know!

PETE

How can two people, a man and a woman, me and you, know each other so well...like we did...like we do...and then suddenly you don't anymore. How does that happen?

DONNA

I'm going home.

PETE

You want me to give you a reason not to go? Huh!?

DONNA

I can't do this anymore!  
I can't live like this.

*(PETE grabs the stroller.)*

PETE

Listen to me. (*Referring to stroller/baby*) This! This right here!

DONNA

(*Turns away from him*) This is so hard.

PETE

Do you know what the Arabic word for baby stroller is? (*No response*) Do you?

DONNA

No.

PETE

Mashaya. I asked. I want to learn it all...with you...together. Baby stroller, baby food, bibs, bottles, bassinets. I want all those things I saw in that store. Rattles, diapers, pacifiers, powder. All of it. And I want you. (*No response; tentatively putting his arms around her*) Standing in that store I saw everything we could have and realized what a shit I've been. It all clicked. Everything opened up...clear. New. It is a new start. (*Touches her belly*) Here. Right from this moment. Donna please! This is an amazing place and the people are amazing and you're amazing. It should be a match made in heaven.

DONNA

They don't have Red Alerts in heaven!

PETE

I know it's hard but don't make it harder. And I'm not trying to rag on you. Really. But you just sit in here. You won't go out. You won't learn the language. You're afraid of the maid for god's sake.

DONNA

I'm not afraid of the maid!

PETE

Ok, ok.

DONNA

I went out today.

PETE

Good!

DONNA

And this man started following me and calling me names.

PETE

Where?

DONNA

On the Corniche! I was watching the feluccas.

PETE

What'd he say?

DONNA

He called me an asshole!

PETE

*(With disbelief)* An Egyptian?

DONNA

He repeated it. He kept saying it. Asshole, asshole!

PETE

*(Thinks; laughs)* Asal.

DONNA

He did!

PETE

No, he was saying asal. Honey. Asal. I learned it in class!

DONNA

What?

PETE

Asal! It's Arabic for honey. He liked you. Laban wi asal. Milk and honey. Men say that to women here. He thought you were cute.

DONNA

And you think that's funny?

PETE

*(Tries to cuddle up to her)* It is funny, "honey".

DONNA

It's not funny. It's frightening.

PETE

Come on, lighten up.

DONNA

Get away.

PETE

Asal.

Get a way! (*Pushes him off*)

DONNA

What? What's the big deal?

PETE

You just don't get it do you?

DONNA

You just misunderstood him.

PETE

I guess it's lucky he didn't say it at a party.

DONNA

What's that sposed to mean?

PETE

If he was calling me honey at a party, you'd have a different attitude. (*No response*) Isn't that right? Some jerk can harass me in the street and it's just part of the deal but if someone talks to me at a party like a normal human being, it's a different story.

(*Pete gives up. HE turns and exits.*)

DONNA, *Continued*

Pete...Pete!

(*DONNA picks up the baby things and places them thoughtfully into the stroller then moves the stroller aside. SHE picks out a stuffed animal and lays down on the bed with it. LIGHTS DIM as DONNA falls asleep and dreams. As SHE dreams, whispers are heard: asal...asal...asal. Offstage the WIVES are also whispering various "don'ts" from the earlier meeting. DONNA tosses and turns. SFX: Dogs and wind sounds. The SHEIHK appears. HE stands for a moment over DONA and waves his arm as if to bring a sense of peace. SFX OUT. DONNA settles into a peaceful sleep. The SHEIHK exits. LIGHTS FADE OUT.*)

## ACT I; SCENE 9

(*AT RISE: Morning. A WAITER sets up a table and chairs opposite DONNA still sleeping on bed. ROZ enters and sits at the table. DONNA suddenly awakes.*)

Pete!

DONNA

(*Fully awake, DONNA realizes that Pete hasn't come home. SHE sits up feeling a bit nauseous; morning sickness. DONNA sees ROZ sitting at the restaurant table looking at her watch. DONNA realizes SHE'S late; jumps up, changes clothes, and rushes off to join ROZ at*

*the restaurant. In the interim, the WAITER has served ROZ two coffees and two pieces of cheesecake. DONNA enters breathless and a bit of a mess.)*

DONNA

Sorry, sorry, I'm sorry. I know I'm late!

ROZ

Hey ma-a-lisch. Don't worry. It's a national tradition.

*(DONNA attempts to straighten her hair and wipe some of the dust from her face ROZ hands her a Wet-wipe.)*

ROZ, *Continues*

Here...Wet-Wipes. Never leave home without them.

DONNA

Sorry...thanks. *(Wipes her face and hands)*

ROZ

I ordered us cheesecake ala Manley.

DONNA

What?

ROZ

Joke! Just a joke, Ladies.

DONNA

Oh, oh, oh... *(Frazzled)* ...right...sorry...I'm just...

ROZ

Are you ok?

DONNA

How long is this storm gonna last?!

ROZ

The dust? Wild, isn't it? I love the colors.

DONNA

It's awful.

ROZ

I don't know. I kinda like it.

DONNA

You like this?!



ROZ

It's elemental, my dear Donna. I feel kinda like Lawrence of Arabia fighting his way across the Sahara.

DONNA

I guess.

ROZ

Fifty days.

DONNA

No way!

ROZ

That's what it means...khamaseen. Fifty. Fifty days.

DONNA

You gotta be kidding.

ROZ

Well usually it sort of comes and goes over the course of fifty days. This one's the worst I've seen.

DONNA

I can't take this for fifty whole days.

ROZ

I know, you look out your window and think "Oh no, we're all gonna die." Dust to dust...

DONNA

God.

ROZ

*(Referring to restaurant)* So, what do you think?

DONNA

What is this place?

ROZ

Cool, isn't it? The old British Officer's Club...or was.

DONNA

Wow.

ROZ

Some of the biggest expeditions into Africa started right here, probably after a large gin or two...or three...or four. Dr. Livingston, I presume! Pip-pop.

It's amazing. It's so...

DONNA

Out of Africa, right?

ROZ

Yes!

DONNA

The last watering hole before they head up the Nile. I come here sometimes to dream and get away from those voodoo barbies in Maaaaadi... (*Pronounced like a sheep bleating*)

DONNA

You don't like the Natural Gas Wives?

ROZ

The "Don't" sisters? (*Shivers*) Honey, the "Wives" give me hives.

DONNA

Then why do you go?

ROZ

Busted.

DONNA

Why?

ROZ

Suffering from a moment of post matrimonial stress syndrome, I actually read one of that guy's books.

DONNA

Really? And you liked it?

ROZ

This is embarrassing.

DONNA

You didn't like it.

ROZ

Don't tell anybody. Promise.

DONNA

What?

ROZ

I thought he looked cute. On the dust jacket.

DONNA

Roz!

ROZ

Swear you won't tell.

DONNA

I thought you hated him!

ROZ

This is mortifying.

DONNA

He was cute.

ROZ

"Do you like who you see when you look in the mirror?"

DONNA

He was!

ROZ

"Are you going to call that guy with the great buns for a date?"

DONNA

"In two words...Impression Management!"

ROZ

In two words...eat me!

DONNA

Notice his buns?

ROZ

Spanx! You were the one who stole the show.

DONNA

He did actually make me think about some stuff.

ROZ

"There's a secret I haven't told anyone..."

DONNA

He did!

I'm not wearing panties!"

ROZ

Roz!

DONNA

I wasn't either!

ROZ

(*Laughing*) It was depressing!

DONNA

Really depressing!

ROZ

He was right about me, though. I am like that!

DONNA

Everybody's like that.

ROZ

I just hide in my cave like...I don't know...stalagwife—and I don't even know how I got here.

DONNA

Hubby's idea?

ROZ

Mr. Gotta-get-ahead.

DONNA

Cairo can be a little scary.

ROZ

Maybe it is my fault. I should try harder. Be more logical.

DONNA

Logical?

ROZ

Part of his "let's improve Donna program". I need to think more logically. That my mind's a mess.

DONNA

Listen, you tell Roscoe...what's his name?

ROZ

Mud.

DONNA

ROZ

You tell old mud boy the great thing about logic is that it's always perfect, and the great thing about people is that they never are. Not even him.

DONNA

We don't talk anymore, we scream.

ROZ

That's no fun.

DONNA

And somehow it's always my fault.

ROZ

How odd.

DONNA

I "need to try harder."

ROZ

The old "you should have tried harder to get out of the way of my fist" routine?

DONNA

What?

ROZ

Donna, does he hit you?

DONNA

...no.

ROZ

I'm sorry. You just kind of had that deer in the headlights look. Probably just from the traffic.

DONNA

*(Pause)* It's not the traffic.

ROZ

Do you want to talk about it?

DONNA

Ninety percent of the time he's really sweet! And he works hard...and I don't know...I love him...I do!

ROZ

So what happened?

DONNA

He accused me of coming on to some guy at the company party. He gets crazy. I don't even recognize him...his face...all I have to do is talk to somebody. And yes he hit me...with a stupid pillow. And I feel like I'm making such a big stupid deal out of it.

ROZ

Did it hurt?

DONNA

Yes!

ROZ

And you think you deserved that?

DONNA

No! He kept hitting me with it. Hard. It scared me.

ROZ

Of course it did.

DONNA

I kept thinking about the baby.

ROZ

Leave the bastard.

DONNA

You don't understand.

ROZ

Donna, honey, I do. My first husband.

DONNA

He hit you?

ROZ

Like a pinata! I think he figured if he whacked me enough times I'd break open and some goodies would fall out.

DONNA

So you left?

ROZ

Finally...He had good communication skills though, that guy. Every time I left, he cried, he negotiated, he talked about his feelings ...before you knew it, there I was back twisting in the breeze...pinata time.

DONNA

I'm sorry.

ROZ

It's amazing really what we let ourselves do to ourselves. *(Pause)* One night we were watching a late night talk show and this Andrew Manley clone asks, "Has the love gone out of your marriage? And I burst out laughing. You know? So Carl asks me what the hell was I laughing at? And...well we got into it and I ended up telling him I needed him like I needed a hole in the head. Which I guess under the circumstances wasn't the smartest thing to say.

DONNA

No.

ROZ

So one black eye later...my Dad asked me what happened...oh my god he was pissed...and I tried to play tough, you know, said I made a mistake marrying Carl and now I was paying the Piper. And he said "Roz, don't pay the piper. Be the Piper."

DONNA

I like that.

ROZ

Carl still sends me anniversary cards. Last one said..."If you love something let it go and if it doesn't come back, hunt it down and kill it."

DONNA

That's scary.

ROZ

Lethal combination of testosterone and Johnny Walker Red. I'm sorry, I'm doing all the moaning and bitching and we're supposed to be talking about you.

DONNA

No, no, listening to you makes me feel better.

ROZ

The Roz Sharpe story should make anyone feel better.

DONNA

Oh my god, that sounded awful.

ROZ

Anyway, the moral of my dreary tale is that this whole man problem thing is universal. You're not alone in that particular wilderness.

DONNA

You didn't have kids?

ROZ

No. No offense, but thank god. Complicates things, doesn't it? The patter of little feet.

DONNA

I feel like such a failure.

ROZ

Donna listen, you gotta save your own life. You let these guys get away with it once, it just gets worse. Believe me. Pinata time. *(Pause)* Listen, come stay with me. Ok? I mean it. Your own room. View of the Nile. *(DONNA shakes her head "no")* Well, just know that it's there. There's a place for you. Any time, doesn't matter, middle of the night. Come. OK?

DONNA

Thank you. *(Pause)* Do you really like it here?

ROZ

Cairo? I love it. Total chaos I know but a sort of warm, lovely, gooey, chaos. Plus Egyptians are hands down the friendliest people on the face of the planet. They could use a new government but, hey, who couldn't?

DONNA

My Grammy was so excited I was coming here. She made me promise to sail in a felucca and ride a camel.

ROZ

Let's see...survey says felucca?...ding, ding, ding. Wonderful. Camel? *(Makes a game show "you've lost" buzzer sound)*...aaannhh! They spit.

DONNA

You never feel like going back to the States?

ROZ

Sure, but it's hard you know? Living overseas changes you. While back home it's still the same old life, liberty and the pursuit of heaviness! And the only thing anybody asks you about Egypt is "Doesn't it scare the pee out of you to live there?"

DONNA

Doesn't it?

ROZ

You know what scares me? Last time I was in the States, I saw a billboard that said "Spank your children for Jesus"!

DONNA

That's awful!



ROZ

Listen, Donna, this is a very user-friendly country if you let it be. Sure it's different, but wouldn't you be just the teeniest, weeniest little bit disappointed if Cairo was all shopping malls and AssUVs?

DONNA

Of course.

ROZ

Just smile! You'll be amazed what happens. And believe me you can do it with Mr. Logic or without him.

DONNA

Baby on the way and all.

ROZ

All I'm saying is don't let this guy run your life.

DONNA

I know...you're right.

ROZ

Turn the mental corner.

DONNA

You remind me of my Grammy.

ROZ

Ah, good looking gal I bet.

DONNA

Sophia Loren with brains.

ROZ

Woo-hoo! Full of pithy advice.

DONNA

I had the worst dream about her last night. That something happened. And I wasn't there. Then I woke up and Mud wasn't there and....I don't know.

ROZ

Hey, what would your old Grammy say?

DONNA

Turn the mental corner.

ROZ

Pip-pop!

DONNA

Be the Piper.

ROZ

And what would Dr. No-butt Andrew Manley say?

DONNA

What?

ROZ

Are you going to sit there and wonder why, why, WHY, your life is so empty? Or are you actually going to eat that mouth-watering, character building, piece of cheesecake?

*(DONNA and ROZ laugh and clink their coffee cups. LIGHTS DIM. THEY rise to leave and give one another a hug. ROZ exits. DONNA heads home.)*

## ACT I; SCENE 10

*(DONNA enters the apartment space crossing paths uncertainly with HELWA who has entered carrying the vacuum. HELWA begins fiddling with the vacuum cleaner, without confidence. DONNA gets headphones and an MP3 player out of a trunk. SHE sits on trunk, puts on headphones, and listens to the VOICE on the player while SHE watches HELWA. The VOICE is that of an Arabic Language Coach who is played by the actor who portrays Brigitte, without the French accent. The LANGUAGE VOICE COACH stands to one side of the stage, not seen by anyone onstage and speaks directly and enthusiastically at the audience.)*

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Welcome to Survival Arabic. *(MUSIC: traditional Arabic; SHE does a short belly dance.)*

This cassette has been designed and provided by Western Resources Oil & Natural Gas expressly to help you in learning the most common and most useful words and phrases you will need when doing business in the Arab Oil World. So you're taking a trip to a fascinating part of the world! That's exciting! Even the ability to exchange greetings and express thanks will arouse and establish an immediate bond. *(DONNA looks up at HELWA)* Arabic is spoken by over 180 million people in more... *(DONNA fast forwards, pointing the device in the direction of the LANGUAGE VOICE COACH who makes a "fast forward" sound)* ...In no time at all you will... *(Fast forward)* ...listen carefully and soon... *(Again, fast forward)* Feyn beer il bit-rohl?...repeat...feyn beer il bit-rohl?

DONNA

*(Attempts to repeat but poorly)* ...feyn il beer bit...?

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Feyn beer il bit-rohl?

DONNA

Feyn il beer bit-rohl?

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Where is the offshore oil well? Feyn beer il bit-rohl baH-ree?...

*(DONNA disgustedly fast forwards.)*

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH, *Continued*

oh-peck...repeat...oh-peck... *(Fast forwards)* ...Good morning...Sa-baH il-kheyr...repeat...Sa-baH il-kheyr...

DONNA

*(Mispronouncing but trying hard)* Sa-hah il-kheyr.

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Reply...Sa-baH il-foll...repeat...sa-baH il-foll.

DONNA

Sa-bah ih...

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Sa-bah il-foll...repeat...

DONNA

Sa-bah...

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

How are you? To a man...iz-zay-yak?...repeat...Iz-zay-yak...

DONNA

Iz-zay-yak?

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

To a woman...iz-zay-yik? Repeat Iz-zay-yik?

DONNA

Iz-zay-yik?

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Answer from a man...ana Kway-yis...I'm good...repeat...ana Kway-yis...

*(DONNA stops the player and addresses HELWA.)*

DONNA

Iz-zay-yik?

(Startled) Madame? HELWA  
 Iz-zay-yik? DONNA  
 (Smiles broadly) Kway-yissa. Il ham-du lil-leh! Kway-yisssa owee, Madame. Your Arabic beautiful. HELWA  
 Right. How do you say thank you? DONNA  
 Shukran. HELWA  
 Shuk-ran. DONNA  
 Sah! [right] HELWA  
 Shukran, Helwa! DONNA  
 Afwan, Madame. HELWA  
 Af-wan...that's you're welcome? Af-wan...How do you say "Let's go shopping."? DONNA  
 Shobbing? Now, Madame? HELWA  
 I feel like flowers. DONNA  
 Yalla, Madame! HELWA  
 Yalla? DONNA  
 Yalla! We go shobbing! Yalla! Ma n'yallaish lay. Yalla! Dana akhdik and Abdo bita il ward wi Eid il gazar..... HELWA

*(HELWA continues to spout rapid Arabic as SHE ushers DONNA out of the apartment. [Translation: Let's go! Why not go? Let's go! I'll take you to Abdo the flower man and Eid the butcher and...] LIGHTS FADE as ARABIC MUSIC UP and DONNA and HELWA exit to go shopping.)*

## END ACT ONE

### ACT II; SCENE 1

*(AT RISE: the apartment later that day. PETE, concerned, pacing. HE starts to write a note. DONNA enters, excited and happy, with flowers in her hand and wearing a new scarf.)*

DONNA

You're home!

PETE

Flowers!

DONNA

Warid, flowers...warid. I've been shopping. Look...

*(DONNA twirls around showing off her new scarf.)*

PETE

Wow. Beautiful.

DONNA

Shukran! I've been learning Arabic. Foll...

PETE

Foll?

DONNA

Like jasmine, foll...smell... *(Holds flower to his nose)*

PETE

Nice. *(DONNA tucks flower behind his ear and gives him a kiss on the cheek.)* I was just writing you a note.

DONNA

*(Placing a flower in his pocket)* Helwa's been teaching me.

PETE

That's great.

DONNA

*(Showering PETE with flowers)* You'd be amazed at all the Arabic words she knows.

PETE

Cute. Listen, I'm sorry but...*(DONNA cuts PETE off with a kiss; wrapping her scarf playfully about him.)* You like me again?

DONNA

Take me to the casbah!

PETE

Is this the proper way for young pregnant women to talk?

DONNA

I have a craving!

PETE

And I have to go play poker.

DONNA

You what?

PETE

I was writing you a note.

DONNA

Poker?

PETE

With the boss.

DONNA

Tonight?

PETE

Saturday nights.

DONNA

I don't want you to play poker.

PETE

Me either! I'm sorry. I'm bummed.

DONNA

Well now we're both bummed.

PETE

Well great. *(Pause)* I like your flowers.

DONNA

I went shopping. I bought flowers. I'm learning Arabic. Tomorrow we're going to the Cairo Museum.

PETE

You and the maid?

DONNA

She likes to go...to see the tourists.

PETE

Ahh.

DONNA

I thought you'd be happy. I thought you'd be pleased.

PETE

I am.

DONNA

I don't know what I thought.

PETE

No, that's great!

DONNA

Right. What do they say? Maleesh?

PETE

Ma-a-lish.

DONNA

Yeah, well, big fat ma-a-lish.

PETE

Donna...

DONNA

If you'd rather go play poker, go play poker.

PETE

They're throwing all this shit at me at work and...

DONNA

Duck.

PETE

...I feel like...What?

DONNA

Duck! They're throwing all this shit at you! Duck!

*(DONNA throws a flower at PETE hitting him in the chest.)*

PETE

*(Pause; picks up the flower)* You mean like...quack, quack?

DONNA

I'm sorry?

PETE

Quack? Quack, quack? *(Tries to pull her in with the scarf; at first she resists)* ...Quack?

DONNA

*(Pause)* Quack?

PETE

Quack, quackquackquackquackquackQUACK! Quack! Quackquackquack??

DONNA

Quack.

PETE

*(Softly)* Quack.

DONNA

Quack?

PETE

*(Kissing her)* Quackquack! You do like me again.

DONNA

Maybe.

PETE

Maybe?

DONNA

Ducks are notorious for flying south on you.

PETE

Not this duck. This duck loves you.

DONNA

*(Plucks petals from a flower)* He loves me not.



PETE

*(Plucks petal)* He loves you.

*(PETE tries to kiss DONNA again. SHE plucks several more petals.)*

DONNA

He loves me not, he loves me not, he loves me not, he loves...

PETE

*(Holds her)* He loves you.

*(THEY kiss.)*

DONNA

*(Looking PETE in the eye)* But how do I know? How can you ever know anyone? Where you trust them? Like to wake up next to them. You know?

PETE

*(Pause)* It's a well known fact that ducks are very trustworthy.

DONNA

Really?

PETE

You've never heard that old saying, "Trust a duck"? *(SHE shakes her head "no")* "The duck stops here?" *(Again "no")* "Kiss a duck for good luck?" *(No)* "Ducks on the pond?" "Sitting ducks?" "To duck or not to duck!" *(SHE trembles; pause)* Why are you trembling?

DONNA

Want to nest?

PETE

Now, I do feel bad.

DONNA

Why?

PETE

Poker.

DONNA

I'll bet ducks have kinky sex lives.

PETE

The boss is meeting me.

DONNA

Quack quack?

PETE

They're short-handed. They'd have to cancel the game. (*DONNA does not respond.*) You want to get ahead you play poker with the boss. That's all there is to it. And that's what we came here for right? To get ahead?

DONNA

I thought you didn't like poker.

PETE

I didn't think you wanted me here.

DONNA

I do want you here.

PETE

Really?

DONNA

Yeah. I've decided.

PETE

But now I can't get out of going! (*No answer*) I'm late.

DONNA

Ok.

PETE

I'm sorry...I really didn't think you wanted me around.

DONNA

I know.

PETE

I'm trying...I am.

DONNA

Quack.

PETE

(*Pause*) Quack.

DONNA

(*As PETE turns to go*) Good luck.

PETE

(*Turning back*) I like your flowers.

DONNA

Me too.

*(PETE exits the apartment. LIGHTS on PETE as HE stops outside the door. LIGHTS DIM on DONNA as SHE picks up flower petals. PETE is sincerely torn, hesitates, then makes a decision and exits.)*

## ACT II; SCENE 2

*(LIGHTS RESTORE on DONNA in the apartment as SHE arranges flowers in a vase. DONNA then crosses and picks up her headphones, continuing her language lesson. The LANGUAGE VOICE COACH enters.)*

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Tayib...good...repeat...tayib...

DONNA

Tayib!

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Tayib..good...repeat.

DONNA

Tayib.

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Bukra...tomorrow...repeat...

DONNA

Bukra

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Bukra...tomorrow...repeat...

DONNA

Bukra.

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

I am traveling by myself tomorrow...Ana mi-saf-ra li waH-dee bukra...repeat...

DONNA

Ana...

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

I am traveling with my family...a-na mi-saf-ra ma-a eyl-tee...repeat...

DONNA

A-na mi-saf-ra...

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

...I am traveling with my husband...a-na mi-saf-ra ma-a goh-zee...re...

*(DONNA turns off device and the LANGUAGE VOICE COACH exits. DONNA opens her phone and calls ROZ who is in a separate area of the stage representing her apartment. LIGHTS UP on ROZ just out of the shower, her hair in a towel. ROZ answers the phone. ROZ quickly dresses for a date throughout the scene.)*

ROZ

Hello?

DONNA

*(With an Egyptian accent)* Ah-lo? Ah-lo? Iz-zay-ik Madame?

ROZ

Donna! Mumtez! Kway-yissa owee! Il ham-du lil-leh. Wenti? Kway-yissa?

DONNA

Wait! You speak Arabic?!

ROZ

Shway-ya, shway-ya. A little, a little.

DONNA

Wow!

ROZ

My first week in Cairo, I accidentally ate sheep brains so I tried to learn enough to avoid that in the future.

DONNA

Sheep brains?

ROZ

Mokh.

DONNA

Sheep brains?

ROZ

Repeat after me. Mish ayez mokh.

DONNA

Mish ayez mokh. Mish ayez mokh!

ROZ

Bazzapt, kway-yisa. Your Arabic very good Madame. You come to my shop? Same perfume Cleopatra wear!

DONNA

La' shukran! Helwa's been teaching me. Ma-a-lish, bukra, in-shah-Allah.

ROZ

Ah, the Egyptian national anthem! Excellent! What else has she taught you?

DONNA

Left, right and straight ahead. Shi-mehl, yi-meen, ala tuul!

ROZ

Always useful. Ala tuul...ala tuul. That's the line all the old Egyptian movies end with. "Straight ahead"... "into the future".

DONNA

And she's going sightseeing with me this week.

ROZ

Fantastic.

DONNA

I know, I'm excited. I sort of feel like Alice in Wonderland.

ROZ

Well listen Alice, don't eat the pills that say "Eat me" and don't play croquet under any circumstances. Meanwhile I can't talk long because I just got out of il dush [shower] and I'm late, I'm late, for a very important date.

DONNA

Like with a man type date?

ROZ

Bazzapt! Wait, wait hold on... *(Sets cell to speakerphone)* Ok, so how are things with Mr. Logic?

DONNA

Mr. Gotta-get-ahead's gone to play poker with his boss.

ROZ

I loathe poker.

DONNA

And we were sorta actually getting romantic for the first time since we've been here.

ROZ

Things are getting a little better then, hunh? I mean aside from him bailing out and leaving you high and not so dry.

DONNA

I think so. I'm afraid I was kind of rough on him about it.

ROZ

Good girl. Drive the bastard to his knees.

DONNA

I was gonna invite you over.

ROZ

I'm sorry, I can't! I have an assignation! That may if I'm careful lead to an affair!

DONNA

I thought you were off men?

ROZ

I've never been off men although I might have said there are men I've wanted to off.

DONNA

Who is it?

ROZ

So far, he's a man of mystery. Which, of course, probably means he's married.

DONNA

No way.

ROZ

Ten to one, but I'm pretending not to notice.

DONNA

Roz!

ROZ

I know, I know. I think I'm in denial. Get it? De-Nile? Arr, arr!

DONNA

But a married man?

ROZ

Of course, I'm hoping he's not married. I think. Hey, as the immortal somebody said, "Life is a desperate search for intimacy" and I'm desperate.

DONNA

Who said that?

ROZ

I don't know...Freud I think...at last call in a bar.

DONNA

You're not desperate.

ROZ

All I know is that the guy has this absolutely decapitating smile and it's been a long time you know? *(Pause)* You're not saying anything.

DONNA

I just hope he's not married.

ROZ

I just hope, please god, in-shah allah he's not into Karoke. If I have to hear "I'll Do It My Way" with an Egyptian accent one more time... *(Looks at time)* Oh god, gotta go, gotta go! If you can believe it, I'm dressed! Ta-da!

DONNA

I'll bet you look hot.

ROZ

*(Looking in mirror)* Venus arising from the sea...and my hair's still wet.

DONNA

Have fun.

ROZ

To be continued. Ciao! Call me. Kiss, kiss, kiss.

DONNA

...Ma a salema.

*(DONNA and ROZ "hang up" phones. ROZ exits as DONNA sits on the bed and begins writing a postcard. LIGHTS DOWN.)*

## ACT II; SCENE 3

*(AT RISE: DONNA and PETE'S apartment; DONNA is writing a letter; HELWA cleaning, and PETE attaching a bicycle bell to the stroller handle.)*

DONNA

Dear Grammy, Sa-bah il-kheyr, sa-bah il-noor! That means good morning, morning of light! I really wish you were here. You'd love it. Helwa, my maid, has been showing me Cairo and

DONNA, *Continued*

teaching me Arabic. We've seen the pyramids, the sphinx, The National Museum, the Citadel, mosques, the camel market... (*PETE rings bell*) No, I haven't sailed in a felucca yet because of the dust but it's on the agenda. My friend Roz says that once you go in a felucca you'll turn into a nihilist. Get it? Nile-ist. Ha, Ha!

PETE

(*Puts doll in stroller; pushes it around*) Tada! Stroller fixed Madame.

DONNA

Helwa owee, habibi. [Very nice, darling]

PETE

(*Rings bell*) Vroom, Vroom! (*Makes screeching tire sound*) Eerrrrttt. Vroom.

DONNA

Pete's working hard at the job and I'm working hard at the marriage.

(*PETE makes "horn" sounds as HE negotiates the room with the stroller. HE circles around HELWA who giggles.*)

PETE

Honk, honk...vroom...eeerrrrttt

(*PETE exits with the stroller.*)

DONNA

My friend Roz says good marriages are made by women and good husbands are made by god...In shah Allah it will all work out. Love you... (*Suddenly feels very uncomfortable*) PS: I recently learned the Arabic word for diarrhea is "is-hell". No kidding.

(*DONNA lays down on bed, hands on stomach as HELWA scrubs the floor. HELWA wears headphones listening to an English Language tape. SHE adjusts the volume on the player and begins repeating after the LANGUAGE VOICE COACH who enters and stands nearby. Since there is no "P" in Arabic, HELWA always pronounces "P" as "B."*)

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Awsa arooha ashteri...I want to go shopping! Repeat!

HELWA

I want go shobbing.

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Awsa arooha ashteri...I want to go shopping.

HELWA

I want to go shobbing.



Shopping...repeat!  
 LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

HELWA  
 Shobbing.

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH  
 (*Gives HELWA a look then continues*) Aw-sa Khass...I want lettuce..repeat.

HELWA  
 I want lettuce.

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH  
 Aw-sa khi-yaar...I want cucumbers...repeat.

HELWA  
 I want koo-cumber.

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH  
 Batatas...potato...repeat.

HELWA  
 Botato.

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH  
 Batatas...potato...repeat.

HELWA  
 Botato.

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH  
 (*Pause*) P not B...Po...tato...repeat!

HELWA  
 Bo...

DONNA  
 Helwa!

(*VOICE stops; LANGUAGE COACH freezes.*)

HELWA  
 (*Entering bedroom*) Yes, Madame?

DONNA  
 Maybe a little music?

HELWA

Masica? Aywa, Madame!

*(HELWA switches player to ARABIC MUSIC and the LANGUAGE VOICE COACH exits. HELWA begins dancing in a traditional Middle-Eastern style similar to belly dancing as SHE sweeps. DONNA, intrigued, watches.)*

HELWA

Feel better Madame?

DONNA

*(Marveling at the dance)* How do you do that?

HELWA

Come. I show Madame!

DONNA

No way! I can't do that.

HELWA

Yes, mumkin, Madame! Egyptians always dancing. Come..come!

*(HELWA helps DONNA to her feet and ties scarf around her hips.)*

DONNA

What's this?

HELWA

To catch the eye of your husband, Madame!

DONNA

Oh god.

HELWA

Ya haleywa, ya haleywa, zayee amer! [You are pretty, pretty, like the moon!] Kway-yissa owee, Madame!

*(MUSIC rises as HELWA demonstrates dance and DONNA does her best to mimic. THEY dance together until the MUSIC ends. DONNA collapses on the bed; HELWS finishes with a fancy flourish.)*

DONNA

Wow!

*(HELWA exits to the kitchen as DONNA rises and begins sorting clothes on the bed, deciding which to donate to the WIVES CLUB "End of the Khamaseen" benefit sale.)*

## ACT II; SCENE 4

*(DONNA places items to donate in a cardboard box. HELWA enters from kitchen carrying a tray of Egyptian coffee.)*

DONNA

How did you learn to dance like that?

HELWA

Egyptian dance? All Egyptians dance like this.

DONNA

Men too?

HELWA

Aywa Madame! Khul ness! All beobles, old, young. You like?

DONNA

It's fantastic... *(HELWA sets coffee in front of DONNA.)* Shukran.

HELWA

Afwan, Madame.

DONNA

*(Holding up blouse)* What do you think? Keep or send to the Khamaseen Sale?

HELWA

*(Hesitates a little)* Beautiful, Madame.

DONNA

Liar, Liar, pants on fire. Aannnh! *(Makes a quiz show buzzer sound; throws blouse into box)* Sale... *(Holds another)* Sale... *(Another)* God...definitely sale. *(Holds up tight fitting pants)* I'm not going to fit into these much longer. I need to go shopping...in shah Allah?

HELWA

*(Claps)* In shah Allah, Madame!

DONNA

*(Holds something; buzzer sound)* Aannhh! *(Throws into box; another)* What about this?

HELWA

Helwa owee.

DONNA

You think?

HELWA

Aywa Madame!

DONNA

Ok, keeper. (*Places aside; another*) Keeper?

(*DONNA holds up yet another article of clothing. SHE looks at HELWA who nods.*)

HELWA

Keeber.

DONNA

(*Another item*) Annnh. (*Into the box; another*) Annnh? (*Looks at HELWA*)

DONNA & HELWA, *Together*

Aannhh!

DONNA

Why did I bring this? Why did I buy this? I'm making Pete take me shopping in Rome.

HELWA

Bellissima!

DONNA

You speak Italian?

HELWA

Shway-yah, Madame. My Mother working for Italian family before she take sick.

DONNA

Oh, I'm sorry. Is she...?

HELWA

Getting old, il ham-du lil-leh.

DONNA

Is she at home? Who takes care of her?

HELWA

Neighbors help, when I work.

DONNA

You don't have any brothers or sisters?

HELWA

Mish hey-na. [Not here.] My brother working many years fee Riyadh. Sending money.

DONNA

He can't work in Egypt?

HELWA

My brother very good student Madame. He takes degree from Cairo University, lakin, there is no work for him here.

DONNA

I'm sorry.

HELWA

Many beobles with no work in Egypt. Many boor beople.

DONNA

Your Mother must miss him.

HELWA

It is hard for her.

DONNA

It's sad when people get old.

HELWA

It is God's will. My Mother very wise woman and knows many things. A good berson. Many women of the neighborhood ask for her.

DONNA

Sounds like my Grandmother.

HELWA

When my friend Hoda and her husband Muhammed live in my building, something happened. Hoda did not get bregnant and Muhammed looking at another woman who very friendly with him. Hoda takes sick and does not eat. She no put black kohl in her eyes or make beautiful. She thinks of death. My mother tell Hoda a curse on her.

DONNA

No. A curse?

HELWA

Yes, Madame! Many womens of the neighborhood coming. They dance to lift djinn from Hoda.

DONNA

They danced?

HELWA

Zar! They dance the zar. To lift the djinn! The curse. Yanni they look Hoda's room and find black shan-ta...a bag...under the bed with magic writings with her name, her hair, and a rag with damm...how do you call it? *(Makes motion of cutting her finger)*

DONNA

Blood?

HELWA

Blood! Yes, with blood! These things we put on roof at night in tub with water. Light from stars cleans. Two chickens, one white, one brown are killed to lift evil from Hoda's body. With god's help she is bregnant in one month's time and we all share her happiness.

DONNA

Wow! Your mother sounds amazing.

HELWA

I read your coffee cup, Madame. My Mother also teach me this.

DONNA

Like reading tea leaves? Tell my fortune?

HELWA

Aywa, your fortune.

DONNA

I'll meet a tall, dark handsome man who'll sweep me off my feet, carry me to a far away land and keep me pregnant and barefoot in the kitchen!

HELWA

*(Helwa nods happily at this pronouncement)* In-shah allah, Madame!

*(HELWA looks into the cup. SHE concentrates and frowns. )*

DONNA

What do you see?

HELWA

I see Mr. Beater *(Mispronounced)* in your cup and... *(Ululation)* ...in shah Allah, a baby.

DONNA

In shah Allah.

HELWA

Ahhh look...very soon Madame learn something hidden. Il serr, how you call it? Something no one tell you?

DONNA

A secret?

HELWA

Aywa, secret! The secret come to help you. Daruree with God's help you be very gamid, strong! You give two bounds (*"Pounds"*) to boor berson in street. Also I take Madame to pass by the Tomb of Imam El-Shafa'i, very famous for good works. Walk seven times (*Moves finger in circle to indicate walking around*) this mosque and receive his baraka. I see good thing comes, in shah allah.

DONNA

Do people really do that? Walk around the mosque seven times.

HELWA

Aywa Madame! My cousin Awateff after seven months bregnant walk seven times seven mosques. She also pass by tomb of most famous woman saint Shaykha Sukkariyya. To stop troubles my mother tell her kill one white bigeon and put dam...blood on white galabeya and wear one month. Sbeical brayers at tomb of Siddi Qubba.

DONNA

Poor pigeon! Do all Muslims do that?

HELWA

No, la'! Mish kida. The bigeon not Islam, Madame. The sheikhs will be angry with this. It is only baladi custom, bess country beobles. From the brophets comes all good thing. The Imams of the mosque where we Bray teach us their lives. We must also make good deed, fee Arabic "saweb", Madame. Saweb.

DONNA

Saweb.

HELWA

Aywa Madame. The Imams teach us good deeds follow us to heaven.

DONNA

Are those men I see in the white clothes Imams? With the beards?

HELWA

La'. These men scare me Madame. Very strong Muslims...very...

DONNA

Strict? Like fundamentalists?

HELWA

Aywa. (*Nods*)

DONNA

They seem so forbidding.

HELWA

They bring me bad dream.

DONNA

Me too. (*Holding up another piece of clothing*) What about this one...? (*HELWAY shakes head "no."*) No? (*HELWA looks in coffee cup, pokes it with her finger, then shakes head "no" again.*) Annnhh! (*DONNA laughs and tosses it in the box.*) They were so weird about telling us what to bring. I kept thinking what do I want to be massacred in. Clean underwear?

HELWA

I don't understand.

DONNA

I...I was afraid. To come here.

HELWA

Afraid from Egypt Madame?!

DONNA

Egypt, bombings, 9/11, the World Trade Center. Everything.

HELWA

This is very bad thing, this bombings! Very bad men! Revena yekfina sharahome! (*An expression to ward off evil or bad luck*) Not Egyptians! Egypt not like this Madam!

DONNA

I know, I know but I can't get it out of my head.

HELWA

These men bad Muslims. The imams teach us to do good deeds!

DONNA

Watching it all on TV. Those horrible pictures day after day, over and over. I couldn't stop watching. Those towers coming down. I worked in a tall building and every day I kept looking out the window imagining how it would be to look out and see...a plane coming.

HELWA

Egypt is very sad for America this day.

DONNA

I couldn't stop crying.

HELWA

Il ham du lilah. I am crying every night. Many Egyptian peoples have family there...lakin, now, you must think only good thoughts for your baby.

DONNA

And it makes me so mad. At myself, for sitting here...for being afraid to even go outside! So stupid!



HELWA

Abadan, never! You are safe here, Madame! Yanni, Egyptians very friendly beoples. (*Lightly touches DONNA'S belly.*) You find much happiness here.

DONNA

I want to.

HELWA

It is written in your cup. In shah Allah.

DONNA

I hope so. Thank you Helwa. Shukran.

HELWA

(*Smiles*) Afwan, Madame. You sit! Rest. I get you something?

DONNA

A glass of water?

HELWA

Aywa, Madame.

(*HELWA rushes off. DONNA picks up a dress and holds it up to herself. HELWA enters with the water and sees the dress.*)

HELWA

Chic owee, Madame. You are very beautiful!

DONNA

Oh right. Me and Heidi Klum. (*Still looking*)

HELWA

Ish-ta! Like movie star. Yousra!

DONNA

Who?

HELWA

Yousra. (*Does a little shimmy*) Most famous Egyptian movie star. All men chasing her.

DONNA

Right. Let's see, hold it up for a second. (*HELWA holds the dress up to self; takes a little dance step.*) Hey...hey! Helwa! You look like a movie star.

HELWA

La' Madame!

DONNA

Yes, yes. Hold it up. Do that again. (*HELWA does.*) That's you! Wow!

HELWA

Oh, Madame.

DONNA

Yes! You take this one. The wives won't miss it.

(*Although protesting, HELWA alternates between admiring herself and thrusting it back on DONNA.*)

HELWA

No please Madame. I cannot wear this. La'.

DONNA

Aywa! It's my good deed for the day! Please?

HELWA

Mish mumkin!

DONNA

Keep it. It'll look fabulous on you.

HELWA

Mustaheel! I could not let people see me. La'.

DONNA

(*Grabs stomach*) Oh, oh.

HELWA

Madame! You sick!

DONNA

No, no. I'm suddenly so hungry.

HELWA

I make you something!

DONNA

Wait! Wait! What's this? (*Grabs coffee cup; points into it*) I see something. I see two women! Movie stars! Going out for lunch!

HELWA

Wa-laahi? [Really?]

DONNA

Wait! They're not movie stars. Isn't that me?! And that's you Helwa! Yes! I'm sure of it. And, oh my god! You're wearing this dress! This very dress and...and...and we're walking around the Cairo Trade Center...seven times and then...and then...eating...oh my god! Eating lobster salads! Helwa!

HELWA

*(Looks in cup)* Enti maknouna! [You're crazy!]

DONNA

Helwa....

HELWA

You crazy Madame!

DONNA

I must have that lobster salad! With fresh basil and cool, crisp arugala. Sweet red peppers. Avocados! Minty cucumbers! Oh my god! This must be one of those cravings! I feel dizzy! I feel faint! I'm having a craving and seeing a vision! Right here in this cup!

HELWA

Stop Madame. You are too funny!

DONNA

I'm ravenous! Helwa, we must go to the shopping center...today! And have lunch! It is written in the cup. And because I'm suddenly so weak, you must go with me!

HELWA

No, Madame!

DONNA

And you must wear this dress!

HELWA

No, Madame! Mish mumkin! Mish mumkin! [Not possible!]

DONNA

Who's gonna know? This is a very high class restaurant. There won't be anybody there who counts. It'll be our...how did you say it...secret?

HELWA

Il serr.

DONNA

Il serr! Wait, wait we can disguise you.

*(DONNA grabs some sunglasses out of the box and puts them on HELWA. SHE then adds a fashionable scarf around her head.)*

DONNA, *Continued*

Yes! That's it! You look great!

HELWA

Lakin this dress Madame!

DONNA

It's your duty! It's your saweb! For me. I insist! Oh my empty stomach. I'm getting weaker. Hurry Helwa! The dress, the dress! You can't go like that to the famous Picolo, Picolo restaurant!

HELWA

Picolo Picolo?

DONNA

Yes! Lobster salad...

HELWA

But Madame...my shoes! Lobster salad...

DONNA

*(Pushing HELWA offstage)* We'll find some. Come on.

HELWA

Allah. Allah.

DONNA

Yalla! Yalla!

*(DONNA and HELWA exit. LIGHTS FADE; ARABIC MUSIC.)*

## ACT II; SCENE 5

*(ARABIC MUSIC continues but shifts into a slower song, then to just a slow drum or flute. LIGHTS DIM as the SHEIHK appears performing a traditional cane dance to the music. As the SHEIHK dances, PETE enters without taking notice. HE paces and looks at his watch. The beat increases. LIGHTS RISE on the Picolo Restaurant. The SHEIHK dances around the WAITER setting up a table and chairs. The SHEIHK dances around one final time surveying the scene and then exits.)*

## ACT II; SCENE 6

*(HELWA, in sunglasses, enters wearing the dress that DONNA gave her. SHE sits nervously but excitedly. The WAITER enters with a pitcher of water water and two glasses. HELWA stands nearby uncertain what to do. The WAITER places the pitcher and glasses on the table, pulls out a chair, gestures for HELWA to sit. SHE does. As HELWA looks around nervously, the WAITER unfolds a napkin and lays it across her lap, startling her. HE exits. HELWA adjusts her napkin to cover as much of her legs as possible. TAMMY and BRIGITTE enter.)*

Helwa? Helwa!

TAMMY

Yes, Madame.

HELWA

I can't believe it. Is that really you?

TAMMY

Aywa, Madame.

HELWA

BRIGITTE  
(Starts to greet HELWA) Bonjour, Mademoiselle...

TAMMY

This is Helwa...my maid.

BRIGITTE

(Stops) Ah, oui.

TAMMY

All dressed up and...you look...you look...

(BRIGITTE looks HELWA over a little too appraisingly.)

BRIGITTE

My husband would like very much this maid.

TAMMY

This is Piccolo, Piccolo isn't it?

BRIGITTE

You must pay her too much.

TAMMY

Helwa, that dress must have cost you a fortune.

BRIGITTE

Maybe a gift of her friend. No? Her lunch date?

TAMMY

Ahhh! Who are you here with Helwa?

HELWA

Madame Donna.

BRIGITTE  
Madame Donna?

TAMMY  
Donna Peters brings you to Piccolo, Piccolo for lunch?

HELWA  
And shobbing. Madame.

BRIGITTE  
Ah je comprends! Shopping with Madame. Dejeuner. Piccolo, Piccolo is convenient. Oui?

TAMMY  
Only where is Madame?

HELWA  
Fee il twa-lit, Madame. [In the toilet]

BRIGITTE  
And the dress? It is very chic, non? You always wear this to go shopping with Madame?  
(*DONNA enters.*)

HELWA  
Madame Donna!

TAMMY  
Donnnaaa! Well hello! How are you?! Donna, you know Brigitte.

BRIGITTE  
Bonjour! Enchante!

DONNA  
Oh hi. Sure...ah...bonjour.

TAMMY  
How are you settling in? You must be lonely.

DONNA  
A little but...

TAMMY  
But you've found Piccolo, Piccolo...we saw little Helwa and wondered who on earth she could be here with?

BRIGITTE  
Yes, it is too bad. We hoped for le good gossip.

DONNA

Gossip?

BRIGITTE

Mais oui! Dressed like this. At the famous Piccolo, Piccolo, non?

TAMMY

We thought some man was sweeping our little maid off her feet.

DONNA

What's wrong with how she's dressed?

BRIGITTE

Nothing! Tres chic, I'm sure...very...American.

*(ROZ enters.)*

ROZ

Well in the words of the immortal Gomer Pyle, "Surprise, surprise, *(Recognizes HELWA; smiles)* ...surprise!" Helwa! Ish-ta! Ish-ta!

DONNA

Roz!

ROZ

In the flesh.

TAMMY

I'll say.

BRIGITTE

Ah Mademoiselle Rozalyn, comment allez-vous? Vous n-etes pas saoule, j'espere? [Not drunk, I hope?]

ROZ

Bonjour, mon pauvre petit chat. Votre robe vous donne l'air d'un boudin. [Trans: Hello, my poor little cat. Your dress makes you look like blood sausage.]

BRIGITTE

Ah. You speak French.

ROZ

Oui, je parle francais comme une vache espagnole! [Trans: Yes, I speak French like a Spanish cow.]

TAMMY

What are you all saying?

BRIGITTE

Mademoiselle Roz has a certain facility for French. Tres drole!

ROZ

Au contraire! I always feel like I butcher the language. Now you girls pull up a couple stools and we'll have a few drinks...tell a few lies...

TAMMY

I'm sure we'd love to join you all.  
Oh...but we really must run.

BRIGITTE

Impossible!  
Perhaps another time.  
Au revoir, you all. Au revoir.

*(TAMMY and BRIGITTE exit.)*

ROZ

A bientot mes cheries! [Goodbye darlings]

DONNA

Ma a salema...You speak French!

ROZ

Self-defense French.

DONNA

Wow, Ms. Multi-lingual.

ROZ

That's me. Multi-Culti. I can avoid brains in six languages. Helwa, gamilla owee! I almost didn't recognize you. New dress?!

HELWA

Madame Donna give to me. You like it?

ROZ

I love it! You look fantastic! Do you like it?

HELWA

I feel like I am in an American movie, Madame!

ROZ

I must say you both look gorgeous all decked out in your racing silks.

DONNA

What about you! *(Meaning ROZ looks great)*

ROZ

I know, I know. No flash photography please!





PETE

No, this is great! You and Helwa can join us.

DONNA

No, no, no, no!!!

*(DONNA turns and starts to leave.)*

PETE

Wait Donna...I can explain!

*(DONNA turns and slaps PETE in the face then rushes out. PETE follows her.)*

HELWA

Madame!

*(HELWA starts to follow but ROZ stops her.)*

ROZ

*(Watching PETE and DONNA exit; Pause)* Merde.

*(LIGHTS FADE OUT.)*

## ACT II; SCENE 7

*(AT RISE: The apartment. DONNA enters and finds a telegram on a chair. SHE begins reading the telegram as the TELEGRAM VOICE OVER is heard.)*

TELEGRAM, V.O.

We regret to inform you of the death of...

DONNA

Oh grammy!

*(DONNA crumples the telegram and slumps onto the bed, totally broken. Slowly SHE regains enough strength to unfold the telegram and continues reading along with the VOICE OVER.)*

TELEGRAM, V.O.

We regret to inform you of the death of... *(DONNA crumbles it up once again, holding the telegram close to her chest and then dropping it onto the floor. The VOICE OVER continues to repeat the message as if broken.)* We regret...we regret...we regret...we regret... *(DONNA grabs her headphones and puts them on to block out the words.)* we regret...

*(DONNA, almost catatonic, stares into space as the LANGUAGE VOICE COACH enters and begins speaking the words and phrases as the "Tape" plays. DONNA does not repeat the words or phrases. The scene becomes less and less realistic as the thoughts and words resound in her head.)*

## LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

...Is there a sandy beach...fee plehj raml?...The water is beautiful...il-may-ya hel-wa gid-dan...

*(PETE enters. HE looks at DONNA who pays no attention to him. HE sees the crumpled telegram, picks it up, opens it, and reads silently as the LANGUAGE VOICE COACH and TELEGRAM VOICE OVER are heard speaking in counterpoint to one another.)*

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Is it safe to swim...  
il-ohm hey-na 'a-mehn?...  
...the sea is very rough...  
il-Bahr heh-yig gid-dan...  
...Is it deep?...il-bahr  
hey-na 'a-mee?...  
Are there sharks...fee 'u-roosh?..

TELEGRAM, V.O.

We regret to inform you of the death of...  
We regret to inform you of the death of...  
We regret to inform you of the death of...  
We regret to inform you of the death of...  
We regret to inform you of the death of...  
We regret to inform you of the death of...  
We regret to inform you of the death of...

*(PETE goes to DONNA but SHE turns away. HE exits as the LANGUAGE VOICE COACH and TELEGRAM VOICE OVERS continue.)*

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Arranging to see someone!...  
When will I see you?...  
a-shoo-fik 'im-ta?  
I'll see you at the office...  
a-shook-fik fil-mak-tab...  
I'll see you at the restaurant...  
a-shoo-fik fil-mat-'am...  
I'll see you at the hotel...  
a-shoo-fik fil-'u-teel...

TELEGRAM. V.O.

We regret to inform you of the death of...  
We regret to inform you of the death of...  
We regret to inform you of the death of...  
We regret to inform you of the death of...  
We regret to inform you of the death of...  
We regret to inform you of the death of...  
We regret to inform you of the death of...

*(HELWA enters and tries to talk to DONNA as the LANGUAGE VOICE COACH continues in counterpoint.)*

LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

I'll see you tomorrow..a-shoo-fik fil bukra.  
the day after tomorrow...ba-di buk-ra...  
two days...yoh-meyn...  
three days...ta-lat ay-yehm  
next week...il-'is-boo ig-gayy...  
from now on...min hi-na wi reh-yih.

HELWA

Madame?

Madame Donna?

Donna?

*(DONNA does not respond to HELWA. The "TAPE" ends transitioning into ARABIC MUSIC and the LANGUAGE VOICE COACH exits. HELWA dresses DONNA in a white galabeya and helps her into bed, tucking her in like a child. HELWA exits. DONNA sleeps restlessly tormented by a bad dream. The ARABIC MUSIC transitions into ZAR MUSIC with LIGHTS UP for the next scene.)*

## ACT II; SCENE 8

*(AT RISE: ZAR MUSIC as DONNA dreams. [In Arabic, “Zar” refers to the removal of a curse; specifically a traditional Egyptian ritual dance, currently against the law, to exorcise djinn/demons.] Donna’s dream, magical and surrealistic in nature, plays out under a bloody full moon. HELWA, the OTHER WOMEN CHARACTERS and THE RUDE MAN, all dressed in white galabeyas, plus any optional ADDITIONAL DANCERS, dance slowly onto the stage. The dance builds slowly into a hypnotic frenzy. [A drum and tambourines can be added]. The DANCERS circle DONNA’S bed. THEY strip the covers and pillows, leaving DONNA exposed on the bed. THEY lift the bed and tilt it up on one end facing the audience. DONNA is still asleep. The DANCERS circle the bed and stage, dancing faster and faster. LIGHTS PULSATE with DRUM BEAT. PETE enters. Alarmed by what HE sees, HE attempts to get through the DANCERS to DONNA but is repeatedly blocked. The SHEIHK enters and watches from the side, disapprovingly. The dance becomes wilder. The SHEIHK walks through the DANCERS to DONNA at which point SHE screams and grabs her stomach as if in pain and a large, bloody patch appears on the galabeya. BLACKOUT. The stage remains silent until SFX: LOUD, SLOW HEARTBEAT followed by SFX: FLASHING RED LIGHTS indicating that an ambulance is taking DONNA to the hospital then LIGHTS and SOUND OUT.)*

## ACT II; SCENE 9

*(AT RISE: The next morning; DONNA is asleep in hospital bed; the sheets are white, no traces of blood. A NURSE enters pushing a cart with a glass of juice and flowers on it. SHE stops by the bed and opens curtains. The morning sun-light streams in. The khamaseen storm is over; the morning is quiet, beautiful, peaceful. The NURSE arranges DONNA’S covers. DONNA suddenly wakes up from her bad dream.)*

DONNA

*(Startled)* Aahh!

NURSE

Sahbah il kher, Madam.

DONNA

*(Confused)* Who are you?

NURSE

My name is Yasmine. I take care of you here in hospital.

DONNA

Hospital?

NURSE

Remember? In the night?

The baby!

DONNA

Your baby is ok! (*Touching DONNA'S stomach*) Just a scare.

NURSE

Oh God...

DONNA

Everything is ok now.

NURSE

The baby's ok?

DONNA

You're both ok. Don't be afraid. You rest now.

NURSE

Thank you. (*Pause*) It's so quiet.

DONNA

It is early, just after first prayer.

NURSE

You speak very good English.

DONNA

Thank you Madame. I study in school.

NURSE

(*Looking out window*) Look, feluccas.

DONNA

I brought you mango juice.

NURSE

Thank you.

DONNA

(*Indicates DONNA'S stomach*) Good for you and the new one.

NURSE

It's good.

DONNA

God has smiled on you.

NURSE

DONNA

I didn't realize...the storm's over!

NURSE

Yes, during the night. il ham-du lil-leh. *(Pause; THEY peer out the window as if watching the boats)* My brother is a boat man.

DONNA

I love the sails. Tattered. Sewn.

NURSE

Your husband was here the night Madame. He was very worried. *(Pause)* He will return shortly I think. Very handsome, your husband, very kind.

DONNA

I want to sail in one.

NURSE

I ask my brother to take you. Yes?

DONNA

Really? He would?

NURSE

Of course, as you like.

DONNA

Oh Yasmine, thank you. It's so beautiful. *(Pause)* I can't get over how quiet it is. All that dust.

NURSE

The khamaseen.

DONNA

I felt like I was in one of those glass Christmas things that are filled with water and when you shake it the snow swirls around inside. *(Demonstrates imaginary toy as NURSE nods)* Except dust instead of snow! You don't know what I mean do you?

NURSE

*(Shakes head)* No, I'm sorry Madame. But you are feeling better?

DONNA

Yes! Much. *(Sees flowers)* Oh! Flowers!

NURSE

They came while you were asleep. One Egyptian woman and one American I think.

DONNA

Friends.

NURSE

They are also very worried about you. Your husband, he will not let them in.

DONNA

I would like to see them.

NURSE

I will watch for them.

DONNA

Thank you. Yasmine, you are very kind.

NURSE

May God keep you. Ma-a sa-leh-ma.

*(The NURSE exits. DONNA peacefully watches the feluccas. SFX: BIRD & BOAT SOUNDS. PETE enters.)*

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**

**CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE FOR:**

**PROPS LIST**  
**ARABIC WORDS**  
(Pronunciation & Meaning)

## PROPS LIST

Vacuum Cleaner  
Extension cord  
Prayer rug  
Khamaseen Logo T-Shirt  
Box of various American cleaning supplies  
Toilet brush  
Roll of red duct tape  
Note card  
Baby stroller  
Bicycle bell  
Lots of baby paraphernalia  
Stuffed animal (preferably a camel)  
Pen  
Postcard  
2 dessert plates with 4 pieces of real cheesecake  
2 forks  
Pocket package of Handi-wipes (or something similar)  
Headphones  
MP3 player  
3 cell phones  
2 different bouquets of fresh flowers  
Make-up products  
Egyptian type scarf (she buys it in Egypt)  
Coffee cup and saucer  
Tray  
Box of assorted women's clothing (Donna's)  
Sunglasses  
Fine restaurant table setting for three  
Telegram  
1 or 2 Tambourines (for zar scene) - optional  
Egyptian drum (for zar scene) - optional  
Fake blood  
Glass of orange juice



## ARABIC WORDS

(in alphabetical order)

NOTE: Words are spelled phonetically as Arabic does not use English script.

**Afwan** (AF-wan): You're welcome

**Ahlan wa sahlān** (AH-lan was SAH-lan): a common greeting

**Ala tuul** (ala-TUUL, long u): straight ahead

**Amees** (a-Mees): Shirt or blouse, from the French word chemise. Many Arabic words are taken from French.

**Amreeka** (am-REE-ka): America

**Ana kway-yis** (ana with short a)(k-why-yis, short I): I am good. Ana = I, kway-yis = good

**Ana misafra li wah-dee** (ana mi-SAF-ra li WAH-dee)

**Ana misafra maa eyl-tee** (ana mi-SAF-ra ma-a ee-YEL-tee)

**Ana misafra maa goh-zee** (ana mi-SAF-ra ma-a GOH-zee)

**Asal** (AH-sal): honey, also a slang term said to a woman

**A-SHOO-fik 'IM-ta?:** When will I see you?

**A-SHOO-fik BUK-ra?:** Can I see you tomorrow?

**A-SHOO-fik fil-MAK-tab:** I'll see you at the office.

**A-SHOO-fik fil-maT-'am:** I'll see you at the restaurant

**A-SHOO-fik fil-'u-TEEL:** I'll see you at the hotel.

**Awateff** (a-WA-teff): woman's name

**Awsa arooha ashteri** (AW-sa a-ROO-ha ash-TEER-ee)

**Awsa khass** (AW-sa khass, short a): I want lettuce

**Aywa:** yes

**Ba-di bukra:** the day after tomorrow

**Baladi** (ba-LA-di, short vowels): country or peasant people

**Baraka** (ba-RA-ka, short a): blessing

**Batatas** (ba-TA-tas): potatoes

**Bazzapt** (baz-ZAPT): exactly!

**Bess:** only

**Bukra** (BUK with long u-ra): tomorrow

**Damm** (damn): blood

**Djinn** (gin): ghost or spirit

**Enti mahnouna** (en-TEE mahk-NOON-na): You're crazy!

**Faransa** (Fa-RAN-sa, short vowels): French?

**Fee Arabic:** in Arabic...

**Fee plehj raml?:** Is there a sandy beach?

**Fee 'u-ROOSH?:** Are there sharks?

**Felucca** (fe-LUK-ka, long u): traditional Nile sailboat

**Feyn il beer bit-rohl?:** Where is the oil well?

**Feyn il beer bit-rohl BAH-ree?:** Where is the offshore oil rig?

**Galabeya** (GA-la-BAY-ya): A traditional peasant type robe often worn around the house when relaxing.

**Gamilla owee** (ga-MEEL-la OW-ee): very beautiful

**Helwa** (HELL-wa): A woman's name meaning "sweet" or "lovely"

**Helwa owee:** very pretty

**Hey-na** (HAY-na): here

**Hoda** (HOE-da): woman's name  
**I-BA-hr HEY-na 'a-MEE?:** Is it deep?  
**Il-BA-hr HEH-yig GID-dan:** the sea is very rough  
**Il gow helwa** (gow like cow): The weather is pretty  
**Il ham-du lil-leh** (ill HAM-du lil-leh): "Thanks to God"  
**Il-'is-BOO ig-gayy:** next week  
**Il-MAY-ya HEL-wa GID-dan:** The water's beautiful  
**Il-ohm hi-na 'a-mehn?:** Is it safe to swim?  
**Il serr** (serr, sounds like hair): secret  
**Imam El-Shafa'i** (EE-mam el SHAF-eye): religious figure  
**Imam El-Shafa'i** (EE-mam el SHAF-eye): religious figure  
**In-na-HAR-da 'eyh?:** What day is today?  
**In-na-HAR-da yohm lit-neyn:** Today is Monday  
**In shah Allah:** God willing, with God's help. Very common phrase.  
**Is-hell** (is-HELL): diarrhea  
**Ishta** (ISH-ta, short vowels): cream, slang for beautiful or sweet or really cool  
**Itaalya** (e-TAL-ya): Italian?  
**Iz-zay-yak** (long a, short a?): How are you? (to a man)  
**Iz-zay-yik** (long a, short i?): How are you? (to a woman)  
**Kawaga** (kha-WA-ga, short a like Ma): Slang for foreigner, non-Egyptian  
**Khamaseen** (KHAAM-a-seen, long e): A sandstorm or the season of sandstorms. The word for fifty is very similar - khamseen, the sandstorm season is said to last about 50 days every year and hence the name khamaseen.  
**Khan el Khalili** (Khan like con-el-KHA-lee-lee): The famous old bazaar or market  
**Khiyaar** (KHEE-yar): cucumber  
**Khol** (coal): black eye makeup  
**Khul ness** (cool ness): all people, everybody  
**kosahri** (ko with long o-SHAR-ee): an Egyptian pasta dish  
**Kway-yissa?:** You're good? (to a woman)  
**Kway-yissa:** I am good (feminine)  
**La'** (la with glottal stop, la-a): no  
**La' shukran:** no, thank you  
**Laban wi asal** (LA-ban wi AH-sal, short i): Milk and honey, referring to a woman's complexion.  
**Lakin** (LACK-in): but, however  
**Maadi** (MAH-dee): A rich suburb of Cairo where a large proportion of Western expats live.  
**MA-a-lisch** (all short vowels): common slang meaning "It doesn't matter", "No big deal"  
**Ma a salema** (ma-a sa-LAY-ma): Good bye  
**Malo** (MA-low): ok or good  
**Ma-sah' il kheyr:** good evening  
**Ma-sah il noor:** evening full of light  
**Ma-sah il mercedes:** (a joke) evening full of Mercedes  
**Masica** (ma-SEE-ka): music  
**Min HEY-na wi REH-yih:** from now on  
**Mish Almanya** (al-MAN-ya): not German  
**Mish hey-na:** not here  
**Mish kida** (mish KID-da, short i): not this way  
**Mish ayez mohk:** I don't want brains.

**Mish mumkin** (mish MUM-kin): not possible  
**Mohk**(long o): brain  
**Mumtez** (mum-TEZ): excellent!  
**Mustaheel** (MOO-sta-HEEL): impossible  
**Oh-peck**: OPEC the Mid-East oil cartel  
**Omar Khayam**: Cheap Egyptian wine named after the poet  
**Owee** (OW-ee, short o): very  
**Sa-BAH il kheyr**: Good morning  
**Sa-BAH il foll**: Morning of flowers. A common greeting.  
**Sah** (short a): right or correct  
**Saweb** (sa-WEB, short vowels): good deeds  
**Shanta** (SHAN-ta): bag or purse  
**Sharm**: Short for Sharm El Sheik, a rich resort town in the Sinai.  
**Shaykha Sukkariyya**: (sheikh -feminine)(SUK-ka-ree-ya, long “u”)  
**Sheihk** (shake, long a): A Muslim religious leader  
**Shi-mehl** (shi-MEEL): left  
**Shuk-ran** (SHUK-ran): Thank you  
**Shway-ya, shway-ya** (sh-WHY-ya): A little, a little  
**Siddi Qubba** (SEE-dee COO-ba): a famous religious figure  
**Tahrir Square** (TAH-hreer): The main Square in downtown Cairo  
**Ta-LAT ay-yehm**: three days  
**Tamatim** (ta-MA-tim): tomato  
**Tata amric** (ta-ta ahm-rick): “As you wish.” What a servant often says to their employer.  
**Tayib** (tie-yib, short i): ok, good  
**Wa-laa-hee**: really?  
**Warid** (WAAR-id): flowers  
**Wenti?** (wen-tee?): And you?  
**Wihish** (WI-hish short i): ugly  
**Ya haleywa** (ya ha-LAY-wa): you are pretty  
**Yalla** (YAL-la): slang for “let’s go” or “we go”  
**Yi-meen** (yi-MEEN): right  
**Yohm eyn**: two days  
**Yohm it-ta-LEHT**: Tuesday  
**Yohm lar-BA**: Wednesday  
**Yohm il-KHA-mees**: Thursday  
**Yohm i-GUM-a (long u)**: Friday  
**Yohm is-sabt**: Saturday  
**Yousra** (YOU-sra): famous sexy Egyptian movie star  
**Zar**: a forbidden dance to exorcise evil spirits, done in secret  
**Zayee amer**: (ZIY-ee, long i, long e) (AM-er): like the moon

#### NOTES:

There is no "P" in Arabic, so "B" is often substituted, as in Bebsi (Pepsi) or botato (potato). Egyptians often have trouble saying P's. We apologize for any errors with the Arabic. If you have an Egyptian helping you, feel free to go with their Arabic suggestions while taking into consideration that Arabic from other countries can be different than Egyptian Arabic.