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KHAMASEEN

BY

TOM COASH

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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
SHEIKH; 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
by Tom Coash

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 slobs.

PETE

Come to bed.

DONNA

There’s a lot of dust.
I’ve got a meeting tomorrow.

I know. I’m sorry.

Come to bed.

I couldn’t sleep.

Mummy tummy?

No.

What then?

(Pause) I dreamt about it again.

Donut, you can’t keep doing this.

I’m sorry.

Honey, it was ten years ago.

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

Take one of your pills.

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...

You need to sleep, I need to sleep.
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.)

BRIGHTTE

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...

BRIGHTTE

Ever...

ALL

Touch the Nile!

MIMI

Don't drink the water!

TAMMY

Don't eat the food!

BRIGHTTE

Don't breathe the air!

MIMI

Don't wear clothes that show your arms.

TAMMY

Or your legs.

BRIGHTTE

Or your breasts.

MIMI

Don't talk to taxi drivers.

TAMMY

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

BRIGHTTE

Unless it's Omar Sharif. (Giggles)
MIMI
Don't pet dogs.

TAMMY
Or cats.

BRIGITTE
Or children.

MIMI
I'd like everybody to know that I had a terrible personal experience with shrimps!

(The WIVES advance on DONNA talking faster.)

BRIGITTE
And doormen.

TAMMY
And maids.

MIMI
Our maid drinks our booze!

TAMMY
Our maid steals our food!

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

TAMMY
We had to send ours to Mecca!

MIMI
We had to get ours out of jail!

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

MIMI
Don't go to coffeehouses.

TAMMY
Don't go to bars.

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

During the Kamseen! (Mispronounced three different ways) ALL

Now then, any questions? MIMI

What's a kawaga? DONNA

(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 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.

BRIGHTTTE

(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
(Flushed) 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 slobs? 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, annoouuuncements...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. (Misperonounced 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! (Embarassed 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 sahlan! 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?!!
BRIGHTTE

Moi?

MANLEY

(Points at ROZ) Do you?

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!

What's the matter?

What do you think’s the matter!

We just got here!

And now we're leaving.

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

Oh, am I?

Ow! Ow! Stop it!

(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!

What's wrong with you?

Next time we go to a party!

What!?

That guy!

What guy?
PETE
That guy you were hanging all over.

DONNA
No…

PETE
That's what I'm talking about!

DONNA
Pete, no...

PETE
I saw you!

DONNA
Don’t do this.

PETE
Me? You!

DONNA
Please...

PETE
Make me look like a putz.

DONNA
I was just talking to him.

PETE
Yeah, right!

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

PETE
I didn't know you were so lonely!

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

PETE
Yeah?

DONNA
You weren't talking to me!
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.
No...Pete...Stop it—

PETE

(Hitting harder) I try to be logical!

DONNA

Ow…Ow!

(PETE hits DONNA several more times, straddles her on the bed, and places the pillow over her face as SHE fights him.)

DONNA

STOP IT! STOP IT!

(DONNA finally succeeds in throwing PETE off. For him it's over; HE is spent. In fact, HE is quickly contrite.)

PETE

(Pause) I'm sorry. (Pause) Donut, I'm sorry. (DONNA weeps) Come on... Donut ...Donna. I just get jealous. You know that...I go crazy.

(PETE touches her on the arm. DONNA jumps as if stung and pushes past him, crying.)

DONNA

Get away!

PETE

Shit...I'm sorry...Donna, hey....come on. (Tries to comfort her; SHE eludes him and heads for the door) Where are you going? Come on...Donna, be reasonable. Where you gonna go?

DONNA

Leave me alone...Leave me alone!  

PETE

There's no where to go. It's not safe!

(DONNA exits. LIGHTS DOWN on PETE as HE exits. DONNA rushes out into the night. SFX: dogs barking, traffic noises, loud male laughter, flashing headlights; a large jet screams past close overhead. DONNA stops, panting, scared, disoriented, hands over face. SFX OUT. SHE catches her breath. After a moment, DONNA straightens up, gets herself together, and marches back into the Wives Meeting.) as lights rise there. She closes eyes, wives unfreeze...)

ACT I; SCENE 6

(DONNA closes her eyes at her seat at the Wives Club Meeting. LIGHTS RESTORE and the OTHERS break their freeze.)
"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) EEEEEUUUURRRRRRRR...

DONNA

Pete...

PETE

This baby’s got it all! (Does a wheelie with the stroller) WhooHooo! (Bumps Donna with stroller)
DONNA
Stop!

PETE
EEEERRRTTTTT!

(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 jealouslyiiide. (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 embraces her; SHE fends him off)* Donna, come on. I know you’re unhappy. I’m sorry. It will get better, I promise.

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?

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.
DONNA

Get a way! *(Pushes him off)*

PETE

What? What's the big deal?

DONNA

You just don't get it do you?

PETE

You just misunderstood him.

DONNA

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

PETE

What's that sposed to mean?

DONNA

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.)*

DONNA

Pete!

*(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)

I ordered us cheesecake ala Manley.

What?

ROZ

Joke! Just a joke, Ladies.

DONNA

Oh, oh, oh… (Frazzled) …right…sorry...I’m just...

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.
DONNA: It’s amazing. It’s so…

ROZ: Out of Africa, right?

DONNA: Yes!

ROZ: 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.
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)...aaanhh! 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-rohli?...repeat...feyn beer il bit-rohli?

DONNA

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

 LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Feyn beer il bit-rohli?
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?

Iz-zay-yik?


Right. How do you say thank you?

Shukran.

Shuk-ran.

Sah! [right]

Shukran, Helwa!

Afwan, Madame.

Af-wan...that's you're welcome? Af-wan...How do you say "Let's go shopping."?

Shobbing? Now, Madame?

I feel like flowers.

Yalla, Madame!

Yalla?

Yalla! We go shobbing! Yalla! Ma n'yallaish lay. Yalla! Dana akhdik and Abdo bita il ward wi Eid il gazar.....
(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, quackquackquackquackQUACK! Quack! Quackquackquack??

DONNA
Quack.

PETE
*(Softly)* Quack.

DONNA
Quack?

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

DONNA
Maybe.

DONNA
Maybe?

PETE
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.

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?

I thought you didn't like poker.

DONNA

I didn't think you wanted me here.

PETE

I do want you here.

DONNA

Really?

PETE

Yeah. I've decided.

DONNA

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

PETE

Ok.

DONNA

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

PETE

I know.

DONNA

I'm trying...I am.

PETE

Quack.

DONNA

*(Pause)* Quack.

PETE

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

DONNA

*(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.

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.

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) Eerrrttt. 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...eerrrttt

(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.
LANGUAGE VOICE COACH

Shopping...repeat!

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 eyee 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) Aannah! (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)* Aannn? *(Into the box; another)* Aannh? *(Looks at HELWA)*

DONNA & HELWA, *Together*

Aannnh!

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

HELWA
Bellisima!

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 pregnant 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 pregnant 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.)* Annhh! *(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! Rebena 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 beople see me. La'.

*(Grabs stomach)* Oh, oh.

DONNA
Madame! You sick!

HELWA
No, no. I'm suddenly so hungry.

DONNA
I make you something!

HELWA
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 arugula. 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

HELWA

Yes! Lobster salad... 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

(ARGABIC 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!

Yes, Madame.

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

Aywa, Madame.

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

This is Helwa...my maid.

(Stops) Ah, oui.

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

(BRIGITTE looks HELWA over a little too appraisingly.)

My husband would like very much this maid.

This is Piccolo, Piccolo isn't it?

You must pay her too much.

Helwa, that dress must have cost you a fortune.

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

Ahhh! Who are you here with Helwa?

Madame Donna.
Madame Donna?

Donna Peters brings you to Piccolo, Piccolo for lunch?

And shobbing, Madame.

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

Only where is Madame?

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

And the dress? It is very chic, non? You always wear this to go shopping with Madame?

(DONNA enters.)

Madame Donna!

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

Bonjour! Enchante!

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

How are you settling in? You must be lonely.

A little but...

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

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!

Self-defense French.

ROZ
Wow, Ms. Multi-lingual.

DONNA
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!
DONNA
You're not gonna sit down?

ROZ
La'. (Watching the entrance) I'm meeting someone.

DONNA
Uh, oh! Not...?

ROZ
Yep, the man of the hour, my secret paramour... (ROZ sees her date. It is PETE who walks in behind DONNA.) And here he is—bachelor #3! (DONNA sees PETE and is confused. PETE stops dead in his tracks.) Donna, Helwa, please meet...

HELWA
Mr. Beater?

(DONNA still confused.)

PETE
Donna!

DONNA
Wait...wait...I don't get it.

ROZ
You know each other?

PETE
Donna. You...you're having lunch.

DONNA
Pete?

ROZ
Oh, shit.

PETE
(Trying desperately to cover) Roz, this is my wife...Donna! Donna, Roz. A friend from...uh...work.

ROZ
Oh, shit.

DONNA
Pete, no!
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...

(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...

(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?
DONNA

The baby!

NURSE

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

DONNA

Oh God...

NURSE

Everything is ok now.

DONNA

The baby's ok?

NURSE

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

DONNA

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

NURSE

It is early, just after first prayer.

DONNA

You speak very good English.

NURSE

Thank you Madame. I study in school.

DONNA

*(Looking out window)* Look, feluccas.

NURSE

I brought you mango juice.

DONNA

Thank you.

NURSE

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

DONNA

It's good.

NURSE

God has smiled on you.
I didn't realize...the storm's over!

DONNA

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.

NURSE

I love the sails. Tattered. Sewn.

DONNA

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

NURSE

I want to sail in one.

DONNA

I ask my brother to take you. Yes?

NURSE

Really? He would?

DONNA

Of course, as you like.

NURSE

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

DONNA

The khamaseen.

NURSE

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?

DONNA

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

NURSE

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

DONNA

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

NURSE

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 t 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 sahlan (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 EEYL-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 '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 oweene (ga-MEEL-la OW-e): very beautiful
Helwa (HELL-wa): A woman’s name meaning “sweet” or “lovely”
Helwa oween: 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
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 salama (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 Almanyya (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 (num-TEZ): excellent!
Mustaheel (MOO-sta-HEEL): impossible
Oh-peek: 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: (sheihk -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
Tamatin (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.