

Carry the Tiger to the Mountain

by

Cherylene Lee

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Commissioned by:

The Contemporary American Theater Festival

Ed Herendeen, Producing Director

CARRY THE TIGER TO THE MOUNTAIN (w.t.)

by
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

CAR SALESMAN/BOUNCER/JUDGES - white male, 40ish
DAVID CHIN/FORTUNE TELLER WONG/SIFU - Asian-American male, 70s
does Tai Chi
HANNAH HSU- Asian-American female, 27
LILY CHIN - Asian-American female, 60s, does Tai Chi
VINCENT CHIN - Asian-American male, early-mid 20s, does Tai Chi
PATTI LIN/EVA LOUIE/ FA MU LAN- Asian-American Female, mid-20s,
does Chinese sword play.
EVANS - white male, 45ish
STETZ - Evans' stepson, white male, 20ish
KATZ/CUSTOMER #1/POLICEMAN/DOCTOR - lawyer, white male, mid 30s
TOMMY/ CUSTOMER #2/CLERK- Vincents' best man, male of color, mid
20s
EDSEL GIRL/SHOWGIRL/NURSE - white female, 30ish

*Playwright's note. Once the play begins, it should be in continuous motion, just as the movements in Tai Chi never come to a complete stop until the set is finished. This play is based on a true incident which took place in Detroit, 1982, though some names have been changed to protect both the innocent and the guilty.

PROLOGUE

(In the dark)

JUDGE (v.o.)

I hereby sentence you to three years probation, and to pay fines and court costs totalling \$3,780. Case dismissed.

(Sound of gavel. A screen lights up with a slide of a new 1982 American car. A white car salesman in a pool of light near the screen)

CAR SALESMAN

Three thousand seven hundred and eighty dollars. That's all? Well, you can't get a new car for that, forget it. Payments over three years, hell, that's only (he calculates) \$125 a month, hardly pays for the paper work. (The slide disappears) But how about a used car, two years old, low mileage, mint condition, original owners—we only sell cars from original owners, you know. (Slides of cars appear as they're mentioned) A 1980 Oldsmobile air conditioned, power steering, power brakes, all new upholstery. A 1980 Ford Maverick, 4-door, AM-FM radio, power everything, including windows, a 1980 Citation, gets great gas mileage, excellent condition. And here's something else you can get...(A slide of Vincent Chin, brain dead, head in bandages) Uh, that was a mistake. (Slide disappears quickly. a pause) No, absolutely not. We don't sell any imports. This is an American dealership. American. Got it? This is Detroit. Motor City, US of A. You want one of those unsafe, ugly, boxy, poorly made pieces of Jap shit which are putting us all outta work? Hey, you can take your lousy three thousand bucks and shove it up your...

(Fade out on car sales man. Fade up on Lily Chin, mid 60s, a Chinese-American woman in a pool of light. She is dressed in black. She is doing Tai Chi to calm herself, to meditate, to take her mind off her problems. She does the first few moves slowly, trying to breathe deeply, until she gets to the Lady Looking at the Mirror movement. She freezes, staring at her outstretched palm)

LILY

Lady looking at Mirror. What does she see?

(Hannah, a young Chinese-American woman enters the pool of light also dressed in black. She is gentle, respectful. Lily stays frozen in her position.)

HANNAH

Mrs. Chin. It's time.

LILY

I didn't teach him. If he knew. Must keep both feet planted, keep horse even, shift weight, this hand goes for throat, keep tongue to roof of mouth, let life force move to fingernail, sharp like ax to wood...I didn't teach him, Hannah.

HANNAH

The limousine is outside.

LILY

Mama coming, Vincent, mama coming.

(Lights fade down on Lily Chin as she and Hannah exit. Music of DANCING IN THE STREETS or identifiable Motown sound. In another pool of light, two white men, one holding baseball bat, and Vincent Chin, a young Chinese man stand together. They start facing the audience, doing in unison the same opening movement Lily used in Tai Chi. Then in slow motion they turn to confront each other. They struggle in slow motion. Vincent is grabbed by one white man, he is held with his arms behind him. The other white man approaches with base ball bat swinging it like a sword in Chinese Opera fashion. Lights fade.)

END OF PROLOGUE

ACT I

(A white car salesman dressed in 1940s clothes with a hat, stands in front of a slide of a 1946 Packard)

CAR SALESMAN

Looking for a reliable car to fit the whole family? One that goes zero to fifty miles per hour in less time than it takes to say, (slowly) "We not only won the war, we're on the road of the American Dream. " This is the car for taking Gramps, little Martha, and your favorite nephew for a spin. Gotta a job in the next town over? Arrive in comfort. The family automobile built for the future in...

(Lights come up on a scrim behind which stands a young Lily Chin in China, 1946, reading a letter from David, her husband to be, in America. We cannot see Lily's face, but we see her dressed in a Chinese Wedding outfit. We hear David's words from the letter overlapping with the CAR SALESMAN)

CAR SALESMAN/DAVID (v.o.)

This land of opportunity, promise, and hope...

(Light fades on CAR SALESMAN, but remains on Lily behind the scrim as she continues preparing her wedding dress.)

DAVID (v.o.)

I know you will like it here. After so many years of waiting, I am finally able to honor our family's arrangement and bring you to America, my bride. I will be there to welcome you when the ship docks in San Francisco. From there, I have booked passage on the Silver Comet to Detroit where I have started my own business, the Chin Family Laundry, a thriving enterprise to support many future sons. I enclose a photograph of myself. Will you send me one of you? I imagine you to be a patient, everlasting flower waiting to bloom in these United States.

(Lights fade on Lily. Lights come up on David Chin, an infirm Chinese-American man in his late 70s. It is 1975, the Chin home. He is dressed in a bathrobe, barefoot, walking slowly with a cane, carrying a single sock, he has recently had kidney stone surgery, and is somewhat delusional and cranky from his medication, mixing up people and times. He is searching for his sock, after a few cursory glances around)

DAVID (calling out)

Lily, I can't find my sock. (to himself) What good is one sock without its mate? LILY. LILY.

(A few beats. Hannah enters carrying a pair of socks, David doesn't see her)

HANNAH

Will these do?

DAVID

You can't be Lily. You're, you're...young.

HANNAH

I'm Hannah Hsu, community center volunteer, remember? Did the doctor say you could get out of bed, Mr. Chin?

(She helps him to sit, she hands him socks, he hands them back.)

DAVID

I don't take socks from strangers.

HANNAH (handing socks back)

But you owned a laundry once, Mrs. Chin told me. Here, let me, you shouldn't be walking barefoot.

(She begins to put socks on his feet, he refuses to let her, always doing the opposite of what she asks.)

DAVID

I don't like strangers playing with my feet.

HANNAH

Your wife had to go out. She asked me to stay with you until she or Vincent returned.

DAVID

You're nothing like the photograph at all.

HANNAH

Photograph?

DAVID

Right on the dock, in front of everyone. (mimicking a woman's voice) "But you look so...different." That meant old. I sent a picture of me at my best. To give a young girl someone to look forward to. Young, handsome, I was young and handsome at 21.

HANNAH

I'm sure. Left foot?

DAVID

"You look so...different." Disappointed. Again.

HANNAH

Right foot?

DAVID

Was it my fault? Hard work, lots of sweat, and there was the war. So I exaggerated a little in letters. (he looks closely at Hannah) Did you think I was a big shot? United States citizen, a high class mucky-muck?

HANNAH

I'm not your wife, Mr. Chin, I'm just trying to help you—

DAVID

Were you more disappointed in me or my laundry? Or because I was not rich?

HANNAH

Maybe you should lie down some more. You've only been out of the hospital for a week.

DAVID

It wasn't my fault. I kept my promises as best I could. Land of opportunity, hope. And Lily, it could have been your fault too, the doctor said ... but we got Vincent anyway, eh? A fine boy, but I wish he wouldn't be so car crazy. All the time, car this, car that, you have to tell him, (loudly) "Son, Life is not a car."

HANNAH

Don't get all worked up, Mr. Chin. It can't be good for your stitches. Try to stay—

DAVID

I don't want stitches, woman, I want socks. Two socks. Mates. A sock needs a mate. Like my legs, one good, one, not so good. But without two, very hard to get around. (Calling out) LILY? LILY—

HANNAH

She's not back, yet, Mr. Chin. Why don't you lie down and relax, I'll get you some jook, Mrs. Chin made you some rice broth. Hungry?

(Lily enters, she is now in her early 60s)

LILY

Vincent not home yet, Hannah? Baba, what you doing out of bed?

DAVID

Still disappointed, huh, Lily? At least you didn't wait 20 years this time.

LILY

You talk crazy.

HANNAH

I think he's a little confused from his medication.

DAVID

Where is my mate? (he stands too quickly, a throbbing pain hits him) Oh.
(he moans, collapses onto the chair, he moans throughout the following.)

LILY

You should be in bed. Do tai-chi breathing. (she demonstrates) In, out. Slow, in, out. It ease the pain.

(David moans, exhaling loudly. Vincent, at age 19 enters, carrying baseball bat.)

VINCENT

Sorry, I'm late, Ma, you should have seen practice—(seeing Lily bent over David) What's happened? Dad? Are you okay?

LILY

Vincent, help your father back into bed. He thinks he's young man. Doctor say to stay in bed. He never listen. I say do tai-chi breathing, in and out. He only want out.

VINCENT (helping David up)

Come on, Dad. Up we go, take it easy, I got you.

(As soon as Vincent touches David, David stops moaning. David leans heavily on Vincent as they exit)

DAVID (to Lily)

Disappointed...again.

HANNAH

Vincent's very good with his father.

LILY

He a good boy.

HANNAH

Looks like his Dad.

LILY (quickly, firmly)

No, he doesn't.

HANNAH (realizing she said a faux pas)

No...maybe not. He looks like you.

LILY

You think so? Vincent always happy.

HANNAH

Like you, Mrs. Chin.

LILY

Umm. you have husband yet, Hannah?

HANNAH

No.

LILY

Boyfriend?

HANNAH

No.

LILY

How old?

HANNAH

I'm twenty-seven.

LILY

Not good to wait so long, Hannah. When I your age I already married, working in Chin Family Laundry, waiting to have children. You should at least have boyfriend by now.

HANNAH

I'm not interested in getting married Mrs. Chin. I want a career.

LILY

Career. Life is not career. Children, that is the future. You want me to find you boyfriend? Vincent know some (pointed) older Chinese boys, have steady jobs, engineers—

HANNAH

Thank you, but I'm still finding out what kind of work interests me.

LILY

In China, everyone thought I was old maid because husband didn't send for me for twenty-four years. All my sisters had to wait for me. They couldn't get married before me. Neighbors call us family of old maids, family of aunties. My father thought he never see grandchildren. Whole family wait on me to marry first.

HANNAH

And I thought I was under pressure.

LILY

Promised at three, not married until 27. (pointed) Your age. Take longer than you think.

HANNAH

Yours was an arranged marriage? I can't imagine what that feels like.

LILY

Leave family, leave home, leave my friends to come to strange country to marry man I don't know except for one picture? What do you think? (She looks around to see if Vincent is listening,) Scary. But I have to keep family promise. Husband say in letters "Land of Opportunity, American Dream" He say we have good life together, have many children, many sons. He send me picture, very handsome, young man, so I do my duty, I come. I leave my home, arrive in San Francisco, but no handsome young man like picture to greet me, only older man, one with teapot belly and hair sprouting in his ears. Same smile, kind smile, but...

HANNAH

False advertising.

LILY

He was so...different...Laundry business not too good...Detroit not so happy...we don't have children for long time ...

HANNAH

Until you got pregnant with Vincent. You're very lucky. (Lily remains silent)
I could never marry someone I'd never seen, let alone move to a strange country to do it.

LILY

Better than being all alone. Old maid with career.

HANNAH

I'm not worried about that.

LILY

No? (She takes Hannah's hand, looks at her palm.) You have a good life line. Strong like me. See? (Lily shows Hannah her palm) You live long time. But when you my age, you see, your hands cannot work so fast, work not enough. Career can go away. Disappear, like that (she squeezes the career line out when the palm is bent) But see there? (she points to offspring line) Those lines are for children, those do not disappear, no matter what.

(Hannah looks at her palm and compares it with Lily's)

HANNAH

Then according to your palm reading, I'm to have three children in the future and you won't have any, but you already have Vincent. You don't really believe in this do you? It's just superstition, Mrs. Chin.

LILY

You should find boyfriend anyway.

HANNAH

I'll pass. Call me if you need any more help with your husband. Mrs. Chin. I'll be glad to come over.

(Hannah exits. Lily waves, then stares at her palm, looking at her children line as lights fade.)

(The Car Salesman is in front of a slide of a 1956 Edsel. This time he is a joined by a female model dressed in a 1956 evening gown as if the two were in the 1956 Motorama in Detroit. As the car salesman speaks, the woman poses to show off both car and her figure.)

CAR SALESMAN

This slippery-skinned sleek finned missile is powered by a dual quad V-8 rear mounted transmission and De Dion rear suspension. Upholstered in crushed grain Vermillion leather, it's the smoothest ride on the road, the one you've all been waiting for. When you hold the key to this car (woman holds up car key) you are holding your future —

CAR SALESMAN/LILY

This is your dream come true.

(Lily as a young woman in 1956 from behind the scrim. She is in western clothes writing caligraphy to her mother in China.)

LILY

— except nothing works, mother. I do not know what is wrong. Perhaps it is the steam of the laundry presses, perhaps the heat. I use the herbs you sent. Mei mei says they worked for her, she has three boys now. Perhaps I am too old. My husband is a good man, but he ... I am sorry I cannot come visit. Money is scarce...our savings are invested in making Edsel key chains, a sign of good luck. I hope so. I will write if I feel any change...we are still trying...

(Lights fade on Lily. Lights up on Vincent, 20, sitting with his dad, showing him pictures of different cars. David is in bathrobe, Vincent is dressed for his job. It is the Chin household, 1976. David has declined further, he pays scant attention to Vincent, he lives almost totally in the past)

VINCENT

I'm getting it with \$2000 down, brand new, manual trans, fuel injection, catalytic converter, gas mileage isn't great, but with two jobs, I can make the payments easy, I've got insurance, ma won't even—

DAVID

NOT MY FAULT.

(David grabs the brochures from Vincent and throws them on the floor)

VINCENT

Dad—

DAVID

That Harry Teng said join the Edsel band wagon. Get an exclusive contract. Be one of a kind. SO WHAT?

VINCENT

Dad. I didn't mean to upset you. I just wanted you to see the car I—

DAVID

Make the key chains of the future, he said. For the dream car, he said. You can't go wrong with Ford, he said. Harry always made money, so I put in...everything. EVERYTHING. Disappointed, again. (calling) Lily, LILY

(David moans as if in pain, he holds his head, Lily enters.)

VINCENT

Sorry, Ma, not one of his good days.

LILY (to David)

Close eyes, breathe slow, in, out. In, out.

(Lily uses finger accupressure on David's head)

VINCENT

I shouldn't have shown him the brochure, I just wanted him to see what I've been saving up for—

LILY (to Vincent)

Not your fault. (to David) Not your fault. You try. That's all. (soothingly, doing Tai Chi breathing) In, out, slowly, in, out.

(David quiets, his breathing becomes regular, he falls asleep)

LILY (to Vincent)

He say no to your car?

VINCENT

I don't think he knew what I was talking about.

LILY

Don't worry. Go ahead, you buy car. I help you. I get overtime at brush factory. I get you special brush for car, I get it free.

VINCENT

Ma, you don't have to, I can pay for this. I got a second job.

LILY

Second job?

VINCENT

Frank Wong said I could wait tables at his restaurant on weekends.

LILY

Frank's father give your father restaurant job after Edsel car go downhill. After baba lose everything. (beat, worried) What happen to first job?

VINCENT

Don't worry ma, I'm still there. Apprentice draftsman, I'm not quitting. (beat) Wait till you see her, she rides like a dream. You and dad will be my first passengers.

LILY

Don't go too fast, now, too dangerous. I never like cars go too fast. Make me scared. That's why I never drive.

VINCENT

Well, no more buses anymore, Ma. I will take you anywhere you want to go. Hey, I could take you and Dad on a vacation, see some sights. Wanna go to New York? What do you think?

LILY

"See the USA, in your Chevrolet" (blows kiss) MOOAH

VINCENT

What?

LILY

You too young. You don't need take me anywhere special, Vincent. I happy when you happy. That's all mother need. I just want you to be careful. When you pick up car?

VINCENT

Tonight after work. Last time on the bus for me.

LILY

Never say last. Bad luck.

VINCENT

Okay then, my first time driving home in my own car. Finally. I can't believe it.

LILY

Like dream come true?

VINCENT

What a pest I was when Dad drove the delivery van for the restaurant, constantly begging him to let me sit in the drivers seat, always putting my hands on that big steering wheel. And he told me I had to choose. I was so little, I could either put my hands on the wheel, or I could slide down the seat to work the pedals. Either I could make something go, or I could steer something straight, one or the other, I couldn't do both. And it was a tough decision, I wanted to do everything. I couldn't wait until I was old enough, not just to reach the pedals and the steering wheel, but for the time when I'd have my own car. Rolling down my window, putting one hand on the steering wheel, one hand on the stickshift, one foot flooring the gas. Knowing I could do whatever I wanted do, to finally feel...feel... I've waited for so long, I can't explain it, ma.

LILY

Your feeling for car? You're like that for me. Drive safe, okay? You promise?

VINCENT

Promise.

(Lights fade)

(Lights up on the Car Saleman in front of a slide of a 1965 Ford Mustang.)

CAR SALESMAN

Affordable. Sporty. Fun to drive. Everything you've wanted in a car and it looks fast just standing still. "Ford has a better idea." You asked for it...

(From behind a scrim, Vincent sits completely stunned by the news of a white female doctor. The doctor hands him a report, makes a conciliatory gesture, Vincent doesn't respond, the doctor exits. Vincent sits alone trying to digest the news.)

VINCENT

I asked if I could be his donor since I had two healthy kidneys. I felt so stupid finding out from the doctor, I guess I should have realized ... but I was always treated like a son—

(Lily downstage, terribly distraught, Vincent steps out from behind the scrim to face Lily.)

LILY

YOU ARE MY SON. I don't care what doctor say. You just like flesh and blood. Everyone say so. Everyone think you my son.

VINCENT

But I'm not, I'm adopted. Why didn't you tell me? Why did I have to find out from a doctor?

LILY

Why should young boy know? Make more friends in school? Make you feel better? Already so few Chinese here. I think maybe people tease you, say mean things, say you are different, they stare at you like women stare at me in China before I get married. Always whispering, gossiping, pointing, they...they pity me. I HATE IT. Old maid, no children. I pretend I don't hear. I don't want you to feel that, feel that shame. I don't lie to you, Vincent. I think of you as flesh and blood, I think no reason to bring it up. Does not do you any good to hear all the bad things that happen before you come. All the doctors, tests, how ashamed I feel. How long I wait. How long I search for you, go agency after agency, I look for young Chinese boy, not Japanese, not Korean, young Chinese boy. I wait six years, month after month, sometimes I think you only dream in my head. I cannot believe you really come. My life start when you come. When you here, we are family. I try very hard to be good mother. I'm not bad, not bad person. You make life happy Vincent, please do not be mad at me.

VINCENT

I'm not mad exactly, but Dad...David—

LILY

Your baba, your father—

VINCENT

The man I've called Dad for the last 16 years needs a kidney. If I were his son, his real son, I could help him.

LILY

You help him already. You everything to us, make us happy. You make us family, real family. You have his name, just like flesh and blood son.

VINCENT

But my flesh and my blood don't match, Ma—(he catches himself). It's just so ... so ... (he's overwhelmed) I've got to think, I'm going for a drive.

(Vincent starts to leave, Lily tries to stop him)

LILY

Vincent don't drive crazy, please. I sorry I not tell you, VINCENT—

VINCENT

Don't worry, I'll be back....Ma

(Vincent exits, Lily stares after him)

LILY

Promise?

(Lights fade on Lily alone)

(Lights up on Car Salesman. A slide of a 1979 Pontiac Firebird on the screen. This time the Car Salesman seems, nervous, his tie is askew, he sweats, and has to repeatedly wipe his brow. Sales of American cars are way down with the 1979 gas shortage and rationing. Two white customers come up to the salesman.)

CAR SALESMAN

Look at this beauty. Is she gorgeous or what? The 1979 Pontiac Firebird, bucket seats, AM-FM stereo radio and cassette, power everything, and, and—

CUSTOMER #1

And what's the miles per gallon?

CAR SALESMAN

You can not find a more fuel efficient car on the market with this kind of—

CUSTOMER #1

The mileage?

CAR SALESMAN

Miles per gallon isn't everything, I can offer—

CUSTOMER #2

It is when you're in line at the pump.

CAR SALESMAN

The Firebird has class, comfort. It's safe. It's real steel, not one of those flimsey fiberglass—

CUSTOMER #1

Less than 15?

CAR SALESMAN

We have lots of options, a dealer warranty for only—

CUSTOMER #2

Less than 12?

CAR SALESMAN

Look at the styling—

CUSTOMER #2

Who cares what the car looks like while waiting in line at the gas station?

CUSTOMER #1

How come Datsuns can do 23 miles per gallon around town when American cars can't break 12?

(The two customers walk away, leaving the salesman staring after them.

Vincent Chin enters, looks over the car.)

VINCENT

Great car. I have the 1976 model. Engine still purrs.

CAR SALESMAN

You willing to testify, kid?

VINCENT

What?

CAR SALESMAN

I could really use a Japanese guy saying my car is better than any import.

VINCENT

But I'm not.

CAR SALESMAN

You just said so, you taking it back?

VINCENT

I'm not Japanese. I'm Chinese. I just want to know what the dealer trade in is for a mint condition, pampered, waxed twice monthly, 1976 Firebird.

CAR SALESMAN

Are you a wiseass or what? I can't get rid of the new models, what the hell would I do with an old one?

VINCENT

Sell it?

CAR SALESMAN

Hey, like Iaccocca says, "If you can find a better car, buy it." My motto, "If I can't sell a better car, dump it."

VINCENT

But I don't want to dump my car, I'd just like to trade my Firebird in for something a little less expensive—

(As soon as he hears "less expensive" the car salesman turns away from Vincent in disgust)

CAR SALESMAN

You Japs make me sick.

(The salesman snaps his fingers and the slide of the Firebird disappears. Vincent stands alone getting madder and madder at his dismissal by the salesman)

VINCENT

—a little less expensive to maintain. You think I want to turn it in? You think I like trading down? I gotta save money, my dad's really sick, I've got a new girlfriend and...and... AND I'M NOT JAPANESE.

LILY (o.s.)

VINCENT, VINCENT, who is this Patti girl who call you all the time?

(Vincent steps into scene of Chin home, 1981. David is now in a wheelchair, almost always unconscious. Lily pushes the wheelchair into a pool of light. A young, pretty Chinese-American girl, Patti Lin, Vincent's soon to be fiancée stands next to Vincent.)

VINCENT

Dad, Ma, I'd like you to meet Patti Lin.

LILY

How you do, Patti. Please excuse Vincent father, he not feeling well. (She touches David's shoulder) David, this is one of Vincent friends, Patti.

PATTY (holding out hand)

A pleasure to meet you Mrs. Chin, Mr. Chin. Vincent's told me so much about you.

LILY (shaking her hand)

Really? He not say too much about you.

VINCENT

Ma—

LILY

But Vincent hardly home these days. He work two jobs you know, always so busy making money to take care of his father.

VINCENT

Ma—

LILY

You like cars? Where you meet Vincent?

VINCENT

Ma, Dad. I wanted you to meet Patti because, well, because she's more than a friend to me. She's much more.

LILY

You work with Vincent? You have...career?

VINCENT

Ma, I've asked Patti to marry me.

(A split second of silence)

LILY

Congratulations, children. You make me very happy. You make grandchildren. Baba, you hear good news? Vincent marry Patti.

(She shakes David gently. She whispers in his ear, he seems to rouse himself and looks directly at Patti without recognition.)

DAVID

You're not Lily. You're...you're young.

(David returns to his stupor)

LILY

Don't listen to words, Patti, he confused, but he mean well. He very, very happy for you both. I know. See how his eyes smile even when closed?

PATTI

I'm honored to become part of your family, Mr. Chin, Mrs. Chin.

VINCENT

Don't be so formal, Patti, you can call them ma and dad now.

PATTI

Thank you for your good wishes...Ma.

LILY

Maybe you call me grandma instead, eh? Let me see your palm, Patti.

(Patti gives her hand to Lily)

LILY

Very good. Yes, very good. You have good health, strong life line, and see here? At least three grandchildren. I help you pick names.

PATTI

Mrs. Chin... Ma, we have to get married first.

LILY

You have to get married?

VINCENT

Patti means you're rushing the grandchildren a bit. We haven't even set a date for the wedding. We'd like to have it next summer.

LILY

We go to fortune teller. He give us auspicious day for wedding. I take care of it, don't worry.

PATTI

I'd like a June wedding, if that's all right.

LILY

June good month. Lots of people like June. We have big guest list. Four hundred people.

PATTI

Four...hundred?

(Patti looks at Vincent in controlled panic)

LILY

Vincent have so many friends. We have big Chinese wedding, big banquet. Vincent, I ask Frank Wong if he close down restaurant for you so you can have banquet there.

VINCENT

Ma, maybe we should go easy on this, even with my raise, I'm still going to—

LILY

Don't worry, I work overtime at brush factory, I help you pay for this. Can't be cheap on wedding. How many time you get married? I want you invite all your friends, invite their family, invite their friends, you have big, big wedding like one your father and I couldn't have.

VINCENT

You don't have to —

LILY

When we get married, only ones there were three workers from Chin laundry business. My family in China, David family in China, no one to celebrate, no money for banquet. But for you, Vincent, I order all your favorite dish, steamed bass with black bean sauce, whole roast suckling pig, beggars chicken in clay pot, anything you and Patti want.

PATTI

That's very generous of you, Mrs. Chin...Ma...Mom.

LILY

We have special dress made for you, Patti. Show off all your gum hay, wedding jewelry. And father have special Chinese locket for Vincent. He get from his father to give to son for wedding day to lock out all bad fortune. (to David) Time to give him brass locket, eh?

(Lily leans over David to whisper in his ear. David is slumped in his wheelchair and doesn't respond.)

LILY

Time for locket, baba. Your son getting married. (she nudges him gently) Baba? You hear? Pretty soon you be grandfather? Goon goon, eh? (no answer) It's Lily, wake up, it's Lily, it's time—

VINCENT

Dad...DAD? (to Patti) Call an ambulance, quick.

(Patti rushes out. Lily stands over David stroking his head, Vincent kneels in front of his father. Their dialog overlaps.)

LILY

Do tai-chi breathing, In, out. Slowly. In, out. Ease pain. In, out. In, out.

VINCENT

Dad, it's Vincent, your son, Dad. Wait, please, not yet, please, not yet. Dad?

(The sound of a Buddhist bell is heard. Vincent and Lily freeze. The bell is rung long and repeatedly as it would be at a funeral. During the ringing of the bell, two men dressed as emergency ambulance workers enter and pick up David and the wheelchair, and exit with David's body. As the bell continues, Patti enters with a black jacket for Vincent and a black coat for Lily. Patti helps Vincent up from his kneeling position and helps him put on his black jacket. They embrace. Patti and Vincent help Lily put on her black coat. Patti embraces Lily, then Vincent embraces Lily. Lily gives Vincent the Chinese brass locket which David would have given to Vincent. She puts it around his neck. Patti and Vincent exit, leaving Lily alone facing audience. The bell ringing ends.)

(A moment of still silence, then in a pool of light Lily begins a set of Tai Chi, we hear her inhaling and exhaling, as she slowly goes through the opening moves. A light comes up on Vincent behind a scrim speaking on the phone to Patti)

VINCENT

I'm worried about her, I took her for a long drive... she seems sort of lost without Dad to take care of...Yeah, she says after 40 years, she misses hearing him shout out her name whenever he was looking for something. Nights are the worst for her, too much empty space...I know, but she still wants us to have the wedding next summer, says it will give her something to look forward to...Uh, Patti, there is one thing, Ma wants to go to a geomancer to choose an auspicious date... I don't believe in fortune tellers either, but for her sake, I think we should go. Is that okay with you?

(Lily should finish the first Tai Chi set as light fades down on Vincent behind the scrim. Lily holds her arms in the opening stance.)

LILY

Not disappointed again.

(Lily steps into a scene with Vincent, Patti, and the geomancer Wong in a fortune teller's shop represented by hanging scrolls, mirrors, incense, and a chaotic mixture of Chinese and American knickknacks. Somewhere in the shop a Detroit Tigers baseball cap should be visible.)

WONG

It's been many years since I saw you, Vincent, but you've grown up to be the fine young man, I knew you would become. Do you remember me?

VINCENT

Uh...Not exactly, Mr. Wong.

LILY

Vincent only six when I first brought him to you.

WONG

Of course, of course. You wouldn't remember that. I see you wear a brass lock for protection, Vincent, to lock out bad fortune.

VINCENT

A gift from my father.

WONG

Perhaps you want one for your lovely bride to be? A wedding present?

(Wong starts rummaging amid his clutter looking for a locket, blowing dust from some objects.)

PATTI

Uh, no. Brass makes my skin turn green. (sotto to Vincent) This is too weird.

VINCENT (sotto to Patti)

It's for Ma. Humor her, okay?

WONG

Then allow me to offer my warmest congratulations to you both.

LILY

Thank you, Mr. Wong. My husband not live to see his son and Patti marry.

WONG

I was sorry to hear of his passing Mrs. Chin. He was a respected man. My condolences.

LILY

No more sorrow. We move ahead. Vincent start own family soon. I like to have special fortune read for them, Mr. Wong. For their wedding.

(She pays the fortune teller.)

WONG

With pleasure. Where do you want to start, skull physiogamy? Do you have any questions?

(Wong starts to feel the lumps on Patti's head. Patti is uncomfortable and embarrassed. She doesn't want her fortune told.)

PATTI (to Lily)

Mom, maybe we could just ask for a good date for the wedding?

LILY

Ask whatever you want. I pay him already.

VINCENT

We're looking to get married next June, Mr. Wong. What would be the best time?

(Wong looks up the dates in his book.)

PATTI

Say around the middle of the month, like June 19th?

(Wong checks, then shakes his head, no, vigorously.)

WONG

Not good. Not good date. June 19th is very, very bad.

(Wong is emphatic, Vincent and Patti are amused. Lily is concerned.)

LILY

Pick new date, quick, don't want bad luck.

VINCENT

How about the 27th? June 27th?

(Wong checks in his book. He speaks quietly.)

WONG

Day of momentous change. Especially between one and three in the afternoon.

VINCENT

Then it's settled. We'll get married on June 27th, 1982. At one o'clock in the afternoon, Patti, you'll become Mrs. Vincent Chin.

(Vincent gives Patti a kiss. Lily looks on and smiles. Lights fade.)

(The slide of a brand new 1982 Honda Civic appears)

CAR SALESMAN (o.s.)

Before...

(The slide changes to a 1982 Honda Civic completely trashed)

CAR SALESMAN (o.s.)

After...

(The slide of a new 1982 Toyota Corolla appears)

CAR SALESMAN (o.s.)

Before...

(The slide changes to a completely trashed 1982 Toyota Corolla)

CAR SALESMAN (o.s.)

After.

(The Car Saleman enters with a baseball bat, swinging it as if taking batting practice)

CAR SALESMAN

See that? (referring to slide) Well listen, Honda, Toyota, Datsun, Nissan, or whatever the hell you're calling yourselves these days, Americans are mad and we're not going to take it anymore. You think you can take over American roads, you think you can take over American jobs, you think you can take over America by selling cars at ridiculously cheap prices without the American auto industry fighting back? Let me tell you, when we play ball, we want a level playing field. Some things are sacred to us— baseball, free enterprise, apple pie, and when my mom heard that Jap imports were responsible for closing two Chrysler dealerships right here in Detroit, (using baseball bat to point to the slide of battered car) well, she took this here bat, and that is what she did to that poorly made piece of shit. My mom, bless her heart, knows how to swing a bat, but if a 62-year old, gray-haired grandmother could put that much damage on a two-door, subcompact, tinny, roller skate of a car, how safe would you feel driving in one? American cars are built to last, (Slide comes up of a 1982 Monte Carlo) "Nobody sweats the details like GM."

(Lily and Vincent in Chin home, 1982. Lily does Tai Chi throughout, Vincent must constantly move to stay in front of Lily's face.)

VINCENT

Patti doesn't want to live here in Oak Park, ma. It's got nothing to do with you, she just doesn't think it's the best area to raise kids.

LILY

I raise you here. You turn out good.

VINCENT

Times have changed, it's not as safe as it was before.

LILY

You and Patti move far away, how will I visit grandchildren?

VINCENT

We're not moving far away, we're just looking at houses in another part of Detroit.

LILY

I don't drive, too old to take bus. Grandmother forgotten. Unwanted intruder. That what you think of me?

VINCENT

Of course not. I'll pick you up, we'll bring the grandchildren to visit often.
(beat) What am I saying? Patti and I aren't even married yet. Ma, you're just thinking too far ahead—

LILY

You want house far away. Fancy neighborhood. Where you raised not good enough?

VINCENT

We're just starting to look, we haven't made any decision.

LILY

What's wrong with look near me? I take care of your children, built-in baby sitter, very safe. Don't you trust own mother? Patti not trust me?

VINCENT

Of course she trusts you. Ma, it has nothing to do with you. It has to do with where Patti and I want to live.

LILY

Far away from me.

VINCENT

Ma—

LILY

You think your life have nothing to do with me? Your life have everything to do with me. I raise you in this house. When you gone, I'm all alone. I say you and Patti marry, move in with me, save lots of money.

VINCENT

Ma—

LILY

You can't even afford wedding without my help.

VINCENT

If you weren't inviting 400 hundred people maybe Patti and I could afford the wedding.

(Lily freezes.)

LILY

What you say? You think it my fault?

VINCENT

No, it's not your fault, it's just I—

LILY

You think it bad to have only son have big wedding celebration, bad to have friends see you marry? Bad to make me happy when you happy?

VINCENT

No it isn't bad. It's just...I'm... Ma, I have lived with you and dad since you...adopted me.

LILY

Forget adoption. You just like flesh and blood son, we do everything for you, father work hard in restaurant, I work hard in factory, try to give you everything you want, give you good home, this your house—

VINCENT

I know you've done everything for me, I'm grateful, but ... Don't you see? It's...it's...it's like my first car. You wanted to help me buy it then, but I wouldn't let you, remember? The car was my dream, and I made it happen. Me. I could play the radio real loud if I wanted, I could drive too fast on freeways—

LILY

You promised me not drive fast—

VINCENT

—if I wanted. I could go wherever I wanted to go. Because that car was my own.

LILY

Silly American idea.

VINCENT

But I didn't buy it because I wanted to get away from you, or because I thought you and Dad couldn't afford it, I bought it because I wanted to. I wanted to.

LILY

Life is not a car, Vincent—

VINCENT

Ma, I'm 27. I'm getting married, I've got a new life ahead of me. It's my time. It's my life.

(Lily turns away from Vincent.)

VINCENT

But just because I bought that car on my own didn't mean I wouldn't drive you anyplace you wanted to go. I always took you with me, didn't I, ma? When you asked me to?

(A long pause. Lily turns back to her son, this is the first time she's had to ask Vincent for something important.)

LILY

Take me with you again, Vincent.

(Lights fade)

(From behind a scrim, lights come up on Patti who is on the phone talking to Lily)

PATTI

I told Vincent it was okay, he's with his buddies... It's a guy thing, they've been planning June 19th as his last Saturday night of freedom.

(Lights come up on another scrim with Lily talking on phone to Patti)

LILY

Don't say last, bad luck. I don't like Vincent going to bar, drinking. Everybody act too crazy. What kind of place best man take him to?

PATTI

Different places, sort of show places.

LILY

For cars?

PATTI

Uh, not exactly, it's a bachelor party, Mrs. Chin...Mom.

LILY

I tell him come home early, too many bad drivers at night. What kind of place show cars at night?

PATTI

You don't want to know.

(Lights fade on the two women. Disco, driving bass and drum music blares, headlights of cars light a themed girly/car bar called "The Body Shop." The car salesman is now a strip joint bouncer with a scantily clad showgirl beside him. A slide of a red Corvette comes up, the showgirl gyrates around it. A bar with two white men, Evans and Stetz, drinking beers, obviously getting plastered. Evans tries to dance with the showgirl in a very clumsy fashion, constantly pawing her, until the Car Salesman separates them. Music continues, but low)

CAR SALESMAN

Use the brakes till you find a greenlight, man.

(Salesman rubs his fingers as if asking for money)

EVANS

Fuck you.

(Tommy, Vincent's best man, enters pulling a reluctant Vincent)

TOMMY

Come on, just one more, my treat.

VINCENT

It's late, Tommy, all the other guys—

TOMMY

They're party poopers, it's my job as best man to take care of you, come on one last drink.

(Showgirl approaches them)

SHOWGIRL

Hey cuties, haven't I seen you before?

VINCENT

Don't think so. My first time.

TOMMY

And his last. He gets married next week.

SHOWGIRL

Then you better floor it, honey.

(She starts to dance with Vincent, pulling him toward the slide of the Corvette which seems to take a lot of Vincent's attention. Tommy goes to bar.)

SHOWGIRL (shimmying at Vincent)

Like my headlights.

VINCENT

Uh...Blinding.

(He keeps his attention on the slide of the Corvette, the dancer insisting he pay her attention, pulling him closer to her. Evans is watching and doesn't like what he sees.)

EVANS

Keep your hands off, Nip.

VINCENT

What?

EVANS (slanting his eyes)

No touchee the merchandise.

(Evans cuts in to dance and is pushed aside by the showgirl. Evans is pissed)

EVANS

He's a mama's boy, he don't even have a stickshift.

(Vincent tries to ignore him, but Evans gets in Vincent's face)

EVANS

You little motherfucker don't know nothing about good pussy.

VINCENT

Don't call me a motherfucker.

EVANS

Because of motherfuckers like you, we're out of work.

VINCENT

I'm not a motherfucker.

TOMMY (pulling Vincent away)

Hey, let it go. It's not worth it.

EVANS (following Vincent)

I don't know if you're a little fucker or a big fucker.

(Vincent strikes Evans and Stetz gets up to help his stepfather. Tommy tries to intervene. Stetz raises a chair, Tommy goes down. Sound of screeching brakes. Everyone in bar freezes, but the driving beat of music continues. Lights up on scrims of Patti and Lily, a Chinese wood block picks up pulse of disco beat)

PATTI

It's okay, Mrs. Chin ... Mom. We want you to live with us. You do like the house, don't you?

LILY

I don't want to be in way. Keep big room for nursery.

PATTI (laughing)

We still have a week till the wedding, don't you think planning a nursery is a little premature?

LILY

Baby need big room. I don't need much space. Just enough to do Tai Chi.

PATTI

You can do that in our garden outside.

(Lights down on Patti and Lily. Wood block stops. Bar scene unfreezes. Driving disco beat continues. Car Salesman/Strip Joint Bouncer breaks up fight between guys.)

CAR SALESMAN

Outside. If you're gonna fight. Take it outside.

(He takes the chair away from Stetz and moves Tommy off with Tommy holding his head. The showgirl backs away, taking the bar with her. The car salesman snaps his fingers, the slide of the red corvette disappears, the driving beat continues under the sound of honking and traffic. Only the headlights remain on stage. Stetz and Evans face off with Vincent in what is now the parking lot.)

STETZ

We're outside now, gook. Ready?

(Evans goes off, returns with a baseball bat. The two men close in on Vincent))

VINCENT

You want to fight? I'll fight, but not with a baseball bat.

EVANS

Wanna Jap sword, motherfucker?

(The driving beat gets louder. The men freeze. Lights up on scrim of Patti and Lily. Chinese wood block takes over.)

LILY

I teach you Tai Chi, very good for pregnant woman. Move life force to new baby.

PATTI

Does Vincent know Tai Chi?

LILY

He think Tai Chi too slow. I tell him not only help breathing, but good for balance. Oldest of all Chinese Martial arts. I never teach him before.

(On "before" lights fade on scrim. The driving beat of Chinese wood blocks becomes the motown sound of the Prologue. We see the three men begin the opening moves of the Tai Chi set. The confrontation is in slow motion, the

bat swung around the head as in Chinese Opera movement. The positions are stylized in the way of Chinese sword play. Stetz pins Vincents' arms, as Evans wields the bat, thrusting and swinging it at Vincent's head. There should be a wood block sound to emphasize each blow which should become faster and louder until the motown sound is gone and only the Chinese wood block is heard. Red silk ribbons representing blood should be thrown around Vincent's head as if spurting blood. When Vincent is finally beaten to the ground, Evans continues to bludgeon him until the stage is almost covered in red ribbons. After the final blow, the final wood block sound, a moment of silence.)

(Lights up on Lily's and Patti's scrims)

LILY

After wedding, Patti, I teach Vincent after.

(The lights fade to black.)

END ACT I

ACT II

(In place of the car salesman and the slides of American cars in ACT I, we now see a Chinese man, a Tai Chi teacher, a Sifu, and a slide of a person in the Tai Chi position of "Carry the Tiger to the Mountain.")

SIFU

Tai Chi Chuan, the ancient Chinese art of exercise and self defense. "Tai Chi" refers to the whole circle, with its two complementary parts Yin and Yang, light and dark, softness and strength. "Chuan" is combat, an integration to harmonize antagonistic movements within oneself and with an opponent. Here (the Sifu refers to the slide) at the beginning of the second set, we see the move "Carry the Tiger to the Mountain." (begins to lower volume) The weight of the horse shifts, the right foot takes a step to the southeast, the left foot turns its sole to face east...

(Light fades down on Sifu. Sound of telephone ringing. Lights up on scrim of Lily in her bathrobe, sleepily answering the telephone.)

LILY

Vincent, you forget key again? (a pause as Lily gets news) No, not my son...not ...VINCENT.

(Lily quickly leaves the scrim, lights fade down. In another pool of light Vincent is wheeled in on a hospital bed. His head is in bandages, we hear the sound of a ventilator, the sound of a heart monitor. He is on IV, a nurse tends to him, then exits. From offstage, we hear a commotion, a clattering of an overturned hospital cart)

LILY (o.s.)

Where Vincent, what you do with him?

NURSE (o.s.)

This is ICU, I'm sorry, you can't just barge (overlapping with Lily)—who are you?

LILY

Mama coming, Vincent, mama coming.

(Lily enters the pool of light in a rush, but stops dead in her tracks when she sees Vincent. For a moment, she is too horrified to move, then she goes to his bedside, stroking his hand, his head.)

LILY

Vincent, Vincent, what happen? What they do to you?

(Lily freezes. From the darkness outside the pool of the hospital light, a cascade of voices, each person coming into a light as in a revolving circle, the voices should almost overlap. The voices include Tommy, the showgirl, the car salesman/bouncer, Evans, Stetz, and a policeman)

TOMMY

Started in the bar—

SHOWGIRL

Called him a motherfucker—

CAR SALESMAN

Told them to take it outside—

EVANS

I had a few drinks—

STETZ

Just a bar room fight—

POLICEMAN

Last assault took place in a McDonald's parking lot—

TOMMY

Chased him for twenty minutes—

SHOWGIRL

Said his kind put them outta work—

CAR SALESMAN

I am not responsible—

EVANS

It was just in my hands, I don't know how—

STETZ

Wanted to teach him a lesson is all—

POLICEMAN

At least four blows to the skull with a baseball bat, Louieville slugger—

TOMMY

Called an ambulance right away—

SHOWGIRL

Called him a nip—

CAR SALESMAN

I had nothing to do with it—

EVANS

I was drunk—

STETZ

He started it—

POLICEMAN

Arrested the two immediately as an off-duty officer at the scene—

TOMMY

Before he lost consciousness he said, "It isn't fair"—

SHOWGIRL

A shame, a real shame—

CAR SALESMAN

Keep me out of it—

EVANS

Arrested? But it was an accident—

STETZ

Arrested? What's the big deal here?

(The police officer is replaced by a doctor, who steps into the hospital scene with Lily.)

DOCTOR

I'm very sorry, Mrs. Chin, we tried, we worked on him for 8 hours, but the brain sustained too much trauma. Your son is brain dead.

LILY

Dead?

DOCTOR

All the scans show no activity in either lobe. He's being kept alive entirely through artificial means.

LILY

Alive?

DOCTOR

There is nothing we can do.

LILY

Nothing?

DOCTOR

In cases like this, the hospital lets the next of kin decide when to remove the life support. I'm sorry. There is no hope of recovery.

LILY

No hope?

DOCTOR

As his surgeon, I will respect your wishes.

LILY

If mother can not give son hope, what else can she give?

DOCTOR

Mrs. Chin, I know this is hard to accept right now—

LILY

Mother always have hope. You know better than mother? (beat) GET OUT.

DOCTOR

This is a very difficult time—

LILY

GET OUT.

DOCTOR

The hospital will respect your decision.

(Doctor exits. Lily bends over Vincent)

LILY

I teach you Tai Chi breathing. In, out, slow like this. (She demonstrates)
Make you better, make you well. Doctor don't know how. Mama know. I
teach you, Vincent, mama here. I stay with you. Mama always with you,
always here.

(She holds on to Vincent's hand, she touches her forehead to his hands,
lights change, as Lily freezes. A healthy Vincent appears, he does the tai chi
movement he describes.)

VINCENT

I'm getting it down. That move, what is it called? Clouds? Yeah, clouds. Keep the arms in motion, hold your hands like you've got a basketball in them, and at the end you do a single whip, which is sort of like shifting gears in a car, transferring into fifth after crusing in fourth without changing speed. What do you think? Am I doing it right? Ma...Ma?

(Patti enters hospital light, overlapping on Vincent's "ma.")

VINCENT/PATTI

Ma?

(Lily raises her head)

PATTI

Ma...Mom...Mrs. Chin? It's me, Patti.

LILY

I want you to squeeze Vincent hand, Patti. Doctor say no hope, but you squeeze his hand. Say hello. Vincent your bride to be here. Vincent open eyes. Say hi to Patti.

PATTI

Vincent? Vincent?

(In silence, Patti embraces Vincent lying in the bed, she is saying goodbye. Lily still does not accept that Vincent is brain dead. The healthy Vincent continues to practice his tai chi throughout)

VINCENT

One of my favorite moves is "Snake creeps down" and then "golden cock stands on one leg." And what comes next? Oh yeah, "Repulse the monkey" Have I got the order right? Is that what comes next?

(Tommy, enters the hospital light to say good by to the Vincent in the bed.)

LILY (to Vincent in bed)

Vincent, best man here. Vincent say hello to Tommy. Vincent open eyes, Tommy here for you. Vincent?

TOMMY (to Vincent in bed)

Buddy, I'm sorry, man. I'm so, so sorry.

(Tommy gives the Vincent in the bed a farewell handshake. He gives his condolences to Patti, the two exit the hospital pool of light. The healthy Vincent continues to do Tai Chi)

VINCENT

I think I missed something. "Step up to form Seven Stars?" Did I do that already? Did I miss something? What have I missed?

(Fortune teller Wong enters the hospital light.)

WONG

It's time, Mrs. Chin.

LILY

Not yet. He too young. Whole life ahead. He and Patti marry, have children, I live with them. You say June 27th, wedding day.

WONG

A day of momentous change, when the funeral takes place. The day his spirit must leave, three days after death. It's time, Mrs. Chin.

LILY

No, no, NO.

(A nurse enters the pool of light.)

NURSE

I'll be outside, Mrs. Chin. Ring when you're ready.

(The nurse exits. Fortune teller Wong gives Lily another brass locket. The healthy Vincent should be finishing his last set of moves, freezing with his hands crossed in front of him in the closing position. Light on him fades.)

LILY

Vincent, you hear mama? You always good boy...Never talk back. Always happy, laugh, make joke. Make me smile, make me so proud. You hear mama? Doctor say no hear, no see, no feeling. Doctor say no hope, If mama can't give you hope what else I give? I not protect you, Vincent. I fail. Mama fail. Vincent...my Vincent... Mama protect you now. Mama, keep you safe.

(She takes the brass locket fortune teller Wong gave her, and places it on Vincent's inert body. Wong exits to get the nurse. The nurse enters, Lily stands aside, as the nurse disconnects the ventilator, the IV. The sound of the ventilator should cease, the beep of the heart monitor getting slower)

NURSE

He's going fast, Mrs. Chin.

LILY (rushing to bedside)

Mama here, Vincent, Mama here.

(The flatline sound of the heart monitor signalling death should drone on merging with the sound of a Buddhist bell heard before which signalled David's death. The monitor sound ceases as the bell continues to ring. The nurse, and two orderlies wheel away Vincent's body leaving Lily standing alone. Hannah enters carrying a black coat for Lily, helping Lily to put it on. Hannah exits Lily's pool of light joining Tommy, Fortune Teller Wong, and Patti, all of them dressed in black. The ringing of the bell stops. In silence, in her separate pool of light, Lily tries to do her Tai Chi exercise as in the

prologue. She cannot get through it, freezing at the Lady Looks at the Mirror move.)

LILY

Lady looking at Mirror. What does she see?

(Hannah enters as in the prologue)

HANNAH

Mrs. Chin. It's time.

LILY

I didn't teach him. If he knew. Must keep both feet planted, keep horse even, shift weight, this hand goes for throat, keep tongue to roof of mouth, let life force move to fingernail, sharp like ax to wood...I didn't teach him, Hannah

HANNAH

The limousine is outside.

LILY

Mama coming, Vincent, mama coming.

(The lights fade down as Lily and Hannah exit)

(Lights up on the Sifu giving another demonstration of Tai Chi. This time the move is, "White stork cools its Wings.")

SIFU

White stork cools its wings. When opportunity and conditions of strength are not grasped, the body is scattered and in disorder; then the fault must be sought in the waist and in the legs. Up or down, forward or backward, left or right, in all movements, this fault is to be guarded against.

(Lights fade down on Sifu and the Tai Chi slide. Lights up on Evans and Stetz talking to their attorney, Katz. Both Evans and Stetz stand, Katz is seated.)

KATZ

You're lucky I got you out on bail. The boy died, you know. That makes this murder two.

EVANS

Look, I admit I was drunk, but I didn't mean no harm--

KATZ

Mr. Evans, you were arrested in the McDonalds parking lot standing over the victim whose head you just bashed in with a baseball bat. There were witnesses.

STETZ

Hey, the gook started it, he sucker punched him, got us all thrown out of that bar —

EVANS

Son, let me tell this my way—

KATZ

Son? You two are related?

EVANS

Mark is my stepson. But he's like my flesh and blood. And he's an eye witness, that kid hit me first.

KATZ

So it was an unprovoked attack on you which started it?

EVANS

Hell, I don't know, it was a bar fight, one thing led to another.

KATZ

Did you feel your life was in danger, is this a case of self-defense?

STETZ

Damn right, it was self-defense. Don works at Chrysler. Me too, but only part-time. Those stinkin' Japanese think they can kick butt, take away our livelihood—

KATZ

Mr. Stetz, Mr. Evans, Vincent Chin was Chinese-American, he was not Japanese.

(pause)

EVANS

You know how it goes after a few beers, who can tell the difference. All I know is the kid hit me, so naturally I had to stand up for myself.

KATZ

So you're saying in the heat of the battle, things got out of hand.

STETZ

Yeah, and driving around looking for that chickenshit didn't make it no better

KATZ

You drove around looking for Chin after he left the bar?

STETZ

Yellow-skinned gook took off, scared as hell once he saw a piece of good ol American lumber—

KATZ

How long did you drive around looking for him?

STETZ

'Bout 20 minutes or so.

KATZ

Twenty minutes before you confronted Chin again?

STETZ

Maybe it was 30 minutes, hell, what difference—

KATZ (overlapping)

That's not exactly the heat of battle—

STETZ (overlapping)

So what, that chink had it coming—

EVANS (to Stetz)

SHUT THE FUCK UP. KEEP YOUR DAMN MOUTH SHUT OR I'LL BUST YOU ONE GOOD. (Silence, then to Katz) Like I said, we'd had a few drinks, the kid punched me, next thing I remember was some cop reading me my rights and me holding a baseball bat. I don't remember nothing else. Now, can you do something for us or not?

KATZ (sighing)

I'll try for a plea bargain, but I don't know if the DA will go for it. I'll try knocking the charge down to manslaughter in exchange for a clear admission of guilt.

STETZ

Hey, I'm not admitting to nothing. I didn't even hit him with the bat
(pointing to Evans) he's the one who took the cuts.

EVANS

SHUT UP, SON. (beat) Will I have to do time?

KATZ

The boy is dead.

EVANS

But I've got a wife, a family, house payments, it was an accident—

KATZ

You drove around searching for him for 20 minutes by accident?

EVANS

Well, we was driving... we was driving around... looking for a hospital...yeah,
a hospital.

KATZ

A hospital?

EVANS

Yeah, Mark's eye was messed up bad by that kid in the bar fight, right, son?

STETZ

What?

EVANS

YOUR EYE—

STETZ

Uh, right. Skin above my eye was bleedin' so bad I couldn't hardly tell Japanese from Chinese.

EVANS

Naturally when I saw my stepson hurt, we had to find a hospital. So we was driving around and I saw that kid, and I was so mad...no, so scared about my stepsons' eye, that I... I... and that's why it all happened in the McDonalds parking lot. Does that explain it?

(long pause)

KATZ

Okay. (to Evans) You'll plead guilty to manslaughter. (to Stetz) And you'll plead—

STETZ

I don't plead nothin.

EVANS

DO AS YOU'RE TOLD—

KATZ (to Stetz)

You'll plead: Noto contendre.

STETZ

What's that mean, huh? Nolo what?

KATZ

It means: No contest.

(Crossfade. Lights up in Chin home. Lily sits behind a scrim, zombie-like. Hannah is helping to clear out wedding presents. Patti, also in dark clothes, enters, carrying a carton of Chinese food.)

PATTI

I brought over some noodles, Hannah, I thought I could help out.

HANNAH

Mrs. Chin, Patti's here. Mrs. Chin? (No answer. To Patti) She's been like this since...how are you doing?

PATTI

Trying to stay busy. I thought maybe I'd come by and help... Ma, have you eaten? Ma, can I come in?

LILY

No say Ma. Vincent say Ma. I'm not your Ma.

PATTI

I thought I could help you sort things out, maybe together we could clean Vincent's room—

LILY

I don't touch Vincent's room. It make me cry. I don't go into garden, it make me cry, I don't go out—

PATTI

Then let me do something for you—

LILY

I don't want your help. You make me cry. You make me see him, see future he never get, house he never buy, children he never have. Go away.

PATTI

Mom ... Ma (she stops herself) Mrs. Chin, please. I lost Vincent too. I want to do something. Let me.

LILY

You lose Vincent, you lose a flame. I lose Vincent, I lose my whole life. Nothing you can do. GO AWAY.

(Patti doesn't know what to say, she looks at Hannah, at the scrim of Lily, not knowing what to do, Patti hesitates, then gives the carton to Hannah. Patti is about to leave when Lily steps out from behind the scrim to face her)

LILY

Patti, you young beautiful, sweet girl. Still have whole life ahead. You marry someday, have family, have good life. Vincent...Vincent love you very much. Goodbye.

(Lily goes back behind the scrim, back to sitting in her old position leaving Patti staring at her.)

PATTI

Goodbye, Mom. Mrs. Chin.

(Patti rushes out. Hannah looks at the food)

HANNAH (to Lily)

You can't go on like this, you've got to eat something.

LILY

I didn't help him. I fail, Hannah. I fail Vincent, I fail my only son,

HANNAH

No you didn't. Don't punish yourself. The two men who killed Vincent are the ones to be punished. Mrs. Chin...Mrs. Chin? (beat) Wouldn't Vincent want you to eat something?

(A beat. Then Lily comes from behind the scrim,)

LILY

He always worry over me. Even when little, when he first come into family, he hold my hand crossing street, always say, watch out, car coming. Look both ways (she looks both ways) I give him live pet rabbit for 8th birthday, but rabbit freeze outside, not move. Little Vincent say, quick, put him in oven, thaw him out, ma, make him well again. He...he... so... gentle. Can't even kill fish for supper. He go fishing, with me and Baba, he catch fish and let it go. Baba say, "just hit fish over head with stick, Vincent, make good dinner." Not Vincent. He can't. He say, "you do it, ma." So I hit fish. I do it with eyes closed to make Vincent his favorite dish. Steam bass with black bean sauce. Vincent serve me fish cheek, sweetest part. Always give me sweetest part. I hit fish on head with stick... I hit...I hit...the way they kill ...they kill Vincent like animal...like animal, Hannah.

HANNAH

They'll be punished. They'll be in jail for a long, long time. Don't worry, they'll be punished.

(Lights fade)

(Lights up on Sifu, with a demonstration of Tai Chi with a healthy Vincent and an opponent. The move is "Needle at the Bottom of the Sea" a defensive move to ward off an opponent with a stick.)

SIFU

This move is called, "Needle at the bottom of the sea." Notice only the toe touches the floor, the torso bends forward from the waist, the body is lowered as much by the bending of the legs as by tipping forward. The head is held upright, not bent down, and the eyes are looking straight ahead. A mistake of inches, but an error of a thousand leagues, therefore the student should pay careful heed to what is said.

(Light on Sifu fades, but the two Tai Chi students continue their movement behind a scrim, their movements should bear some similarity to the beating of Vincent Chin. Lights up on a Judge who sits before defense attorney Katz, Stetz, and Evans)

JUDGE

Will the defendants please rise.

(Evans, Stetz, and their attorney rise for the sentencing)

JUDGE

You have pleaded guilty to the charge of manslaughter in the beating death of Vincent Chin. Donald Evans you are a responsible man who has worked at Chrysler for 18 years with no previous criminal record. Your stepson, Mark Stetz, has also worked for Chrysler and also has no criminal record. Mark, I understand you are a part-time student as well. I do not think putting either one of you in prison would do you or society any good. In my court, you don't make the punishment fit the crime: you make the punishment fit the criminal. I believe you two men are still responsible citizens who would not go out and harm anyone else. Therefore, I hereby order each of you to serve three years probation, and to pay fines and court costs totalling \$3780. You are ordered to repay this debt to society at a rate of \$125 dollars a month. Case dismissed.

(Katz, Evans, Stetz shake hands, congratulate each other as they exit. The Tai Chi demonstration ends, the light on them goes out as the Judge pounds the gavel. At the sound of the gavel, as in the prologue, a slide of a new 1982 American car appears. The Judge throws off his judicial robes and reveals himself to be the car salesman seen in the prologue)

CAR SALEMAN

Three thousand seven hundred and eighty dollars? That's all? Well, you can't get a new car for that, forget it. No, we don't sell any imports. This is an American dealership, American got it? This is Detroit, Motor City, US of A. Hey, you can take your lousy three thousand bucks and shove it up your—

(Lights up on an outraged circle of Asian citizens and Lily, again a cascade of voices which almost overlap)

TOMMY

Three thousand dollars? You're joking.

HANNAH

Three years probation? Outrageous.

WONG

There's a bigger punishment for dog killing—

EVA

They killed a Chinese man like an animal—

TOMMY

It's open season on Asians—

HANNAH

It's all right to kill so long as you work for Chrysler?

WONG

What do I teach my grandchildren about American Justice?

EVA

Just like Vincent's last words, "It isn't fair."

LILY

These men kill my son, they hold him, beat him, break his head open. They think Vincent animal. No punishment? NOTHING? Vincent not worthless, my son, not animal, my son good, my son, my son...

(Lily collapses, she is tended to by Hannah, who helps Lily to sit in a chair in the Chin house. A very business-like Asian lawyer carrying a briefcase, Eva Louie, steps into Chin home pool of light. Lily sits utterly desolate.)

HANNAH

Mrs. Chin, Mrs. Chin, there's a lawyer here to see you, her name is Eva Louie.

EVA

Mrs. Chin, I'm sorry to intrude on your grief, but I want you to know, the Asian community of Detroit is outraged by the sentence given to your son's murderers.

LILY

My son good, Vincent not animal...

EVA

Many of us want to take action against this travesty of justice.

HANNAH

Can you get the men re-tried?

EVA

That would be double jeopardy, that's against the law.

LILY

Law. What kind of law let killers go free?

EVA

What we can do, Mrs. Chin, is to circulate petitions against the decision, get as many people as we know to sign them, we can call up our elected officials and let them know this sentence stinks.

HANNAH

What will that do?

EVA

Our hope is to put public pressure on the judge, bring in the media, let him know that Asian Americans are united against this injustice and force him to recind his decision. We have to make waves, hold demcnstrations, petition people on the streets, and...and Mrs. Chin, we'd like your support.

LILY

You want me to talk to strangers on street? Stranger not care, strangers kill Vincent.

EVA

There are many, many people who want justice for Vincent. We have to take action or we'll be condoning this kind of discrimination. Do you understand what I'm getting at?

(Eva puts her left hand on Lily's hand. Lily notices Eva doesn't wear a wedding band)

LILY

Not married. You have boyfriend Miss Louie?

EVA

Please call me, Eva. We'd like you to stand with us at rallies, press conferences...maybe say a few words. I know how painful—

LILY

How can you know? Only a mother know. You not even married, yet.

EVA

You would help people to understand what happened, be a symbol—

LILY

I'm the mama, I only have son. One son. Now no more. No more dream.

HANNAH

Mrs. Chin has suffered enough grief, she doesn't need to take it public.

EVA

She would put a face and voice to anti-Asian discrimination—

LILY

You want me to talk about Vincent. How much my heart ache for him, how every day feel empty? You not know what it feels like to have child, watch him grow, watch him die. You want me to tell stranger how my heart hurt, how my tears taste? When I think of my Vincent, such a good son, his hair always combed so nice, all gone...all gone...

(Lily breaks down)

HANNAH

Perhaps you should go, Eva.

(The women freeze. A healthy Vincent appears. He is doing Tai Chi. He is practicing the end of the second set, getting ready for the third, he does the movements as he says them. Lily is the only one aware of him.)

VINCENT

Watch this. Step up, parry and punch. Pretty good, huh? So I'm ready for the third set, now. After carry the tiger to the mountain move, after the single whip, part the wild horses' mane, and grasp the bird's tail, then comes... then comes what? ... then comes., Fair lady works at shuttles. Have I got it?

LILY

Very good, Vincent. But I didn't teach you. How did you learn?

VINCENT

Fair lady works the shuttles. Yeah, it's a good one, real defense. Gotta show the bastards. Sifu says, "When you yield to a hard force, it is called moving away, when you take on a hard force, this is called, sticking with it."

LILY

Vincent, who taught you?

VINCENT

Fair lady works at the shuttle. "When you take on a hard force, this is called, sticking with it." Got it.

(The healthy Vincent disappears. The other two women unfreeze.)

EVA

Thank you for seeing me, Mrs. Chin. We'll respect your privacy. My deepest sympathy.

(Hannah starts to show Eva out when Lily calls Eva back)

LILY

Miss Louie? Eva? You want me talk to stranger, I talk. I want justice for Vincent. I stick with it.

(Crossfade, lights up on five white auto workers facing audience protesting Japanese imports. They carry protest posters "Park it in Tokyo" "US cars for US roads" "Buy American" "Jap Cars = No Jobs." They chant.)

AUTOWORKERS

HEY, HEY, HO, HO,
JAPANESE CARS ARE PRICED TOO LOW

(The auto workers continue to chant, but one by one they are replaced by Asian faces who takeover the posters and turn them around. The posters now read "Justice for Vincent" "It's not fair" "Jail Racist Killers" "\$3000 does not equal human life." The Asian demonstrators chant:)

DEMONSTRATORS

HEY, HEY, HO, HO
RACIST KILLERS HAVE GOT TO GO

(Eva and Hannah are among the protestors. Eva holds a bullhorn, she addresses the audience,)

EVA

We, the United Citizens for Justice seek a reversal of the lenient sentence given to the murderers of Vincent Chin. There were two crimes committed in Detroit, the first one killed Vincent, the second one let his killers go free. Today, we stand united behind the person who has suffered the most terrible loss imaginable, but who has chosen to speak out against these Anti-Asian crimes, Vincent's mother, Lily Chin.

(Lily comes out and faces the crowd, the bullhorn is passed to her, she is shy, uncertain how to use it, but she speaks)

LILY

I want justice for Vincent. I want justice for my son.

(The chant "We want justice, we want justice," starts and is continued as flashbulbs go off, someone with a TV video camera comes on stage panning the protestors and the audience. The crowd is projected on one of the scrims. The protestors and Lily move to one side of the stage. On the other side of the stage, Attorney Katz, Evans, and Stetz. This time Evans sits, the other two stand.)

EVANS

What's to sweat over? The judge refused to reverse his decision, even with all those demonstrations. He even said if he had it to do all over again, he'd do the same thing.

KATZ

Don't you get it? The publicity has brought in the F.B.I., they're re-investigating the way the entire case was handled. There's talk of a civil suit and you've already admitted guilt.

STETZ

So? The judge let us go.

KATZ

Because you pleaded guilty. You weren't acquitted, you cut a deal.

EVANS

You think it could backfire?

STETZ

Shit, I knew it, you said it was no contest, I knew we shouldn't have pleaded nothing—

EVANS (to Stetz)

SHUT UP. (to Katz) So what's the worst that could happen?

KATZ

You could both be tried in a Federal Court for violation of Chin's civil rights. They're making this a racial thing.

EVANS

Oh for crying out loud—We ain't racists, it was an accident.

STETZ

I thought you said we'd be done with this shit, I'm still a part-time student—

KATZ

It's not certain things will go that far. But with all this hoopla over the Chin woman ... she's been going to so many support rallies, you'd think she was running for office.

EVANS

What are our chances?

KATZ

I don't know, the Feds have never tried a case like this before. Blacks, yes, but not Asians. We might still get by if the media focussed on some other issue besides that...that...that mother.

(Crossfade to Lily standing at a podium, her supporters behind her. She addresses the audience. This time Lily is much more assured, much more forceful in way she speaks.)

LILY

I speak to you as Vincent's mama, so no other mama have to go through what I go through. If two Chinese kill white person, they go to jail, maybe for whole life. My son, Chinese. Two white men kill him, beat him like animal (her voice breaks, but she continues) ...they don't go to jail, only get three year probation, pay fine, three thousand dollar. This not justice. This not fair. Skin is different, but heart the same. A mother always want to protect children, give children hope. No hope without justice. I want justice for Vincent. I want justice for my son. Thank you.

(Sound of applause. Lily steps away from the podium, she is totally exhausted. The podium is wheeled away, Hannah helps Lily to sit.)

HANNAH

You did great. Tired?

(Eva enters very excited)

EVA

We've got letters of support from the Mayor of Highland Park, the Attorney General of the State of Michigan, the archdiocese of Detroit, the Roundtable of Christians and Jews, the Latino-Americans for Social and Economic Development, the Anti-Defamation League, and the NAACP. And here's the topper, Mrs Chin, I just got word that the Justice Dept. has granted us an interview with Asst. Attorney General William Reynolds. We fly to Washington next week. We're finally going to get a federal indictment to put those killers away. Isn't that great?

(Eva and Hannah high-five each other. Lily stays seated, lost in her own thoughts.)

LILY (to herself)

Vincent 29 year old today. If he live.

(This cuts short the celebration of the two younger women. Lights fade)

(Lights up on the Sifu. He is demonstrating "Repulse the monkey" to a healthy Vincent who continues the movement as Sifu speaks.)

SIFU

Step back and Repulse Monkey. Often one encounters someone who even with many years of study is still subdued by others. This is because he has not realized the fault of "Double heaviness." To avoid this fault one must know to stick is also to move away, to move away is also to stick. Understanding of this is necessary in order to understand force.

(Lights fade on Sifu and Vincent up on Katz, Stetz, and Evans. This time Stetz sits while Katz and Evans stand)

EVANS

NO WAY. No way I'm going to pay that Chin woman nothing, I don't care how many civil suits she brings against me. And how am I supposed to pay her when the Feds sentenced me to 25 years?

KATZ

Take it easy. We filed an appeal, you're out on bail, you don't have to pay her anything yet.

STETZ

I hear Chrysler's rehiring. Maybe you could get your old job back—

EVANS

Shut your mouth. You go to work and support this family. You're the only one found (mimicking woman Judge's voice) "Not Guilty."

STETZ

Hey, I wasn't the guy who swung the bat, I wasn't the guy who said it was motherfuckers like him who took away our jobs, I'm only part time—

EVANS (pointing to brain)

Part-time up there.

STETZ

You could still make a few bucks before—

EVANS

Are you kidding? Every cent I make will go to that Chin woman. After what she's put this family through? I'll starve first. It's been four fucking years, and I'm still in fucking court. When does this thing end?

KATZ

The conviction will be declared a mistrial. We've got copies of the tapes.

EVANS

The judge didn't let you use them.

KATZ

That's why it's a mistrial. The tapes should have been admitted. To me they sound suspiciously like a certain over achieving Chinese lawyer was interfering with justice by attempting to coach witnesses. I mean what the hell was she doing interviewing people, she's not the District Attorney?

(Cross fade to Eva Louie with Tommy, the showgirl, the car salesman. Eva starts a tape recorder.)

EVA

In filing our brief with the Justice Department, it's important to discover exactly what was said that night leading up to the beating. If Vincent was interfered with because of his race while enjoying the services of a public place.

TOMMY

Like I said, I heard Vincent saying, "I'm not a motherfucker."

EVA

In response to Evans saying to him: It's because of motherfuckers like you, we're out of work?

TOMMY

I remember that white guy saying something like: I don't know if you're a big fucker or a little fucker.

EVA

And the thing about jobs referring to being Asian?

TOMMY

Ms. Louie, the music was real loud—

SHOWGIRL

I remember hearing it, that white guy cut in and shoved Vincent out of the way, and that's when he said motherfuckers like him took away jobs.

CAR SALESMAN

Yeah, right, like you remember everything you hear from johns.

SHOWGIRL

I am an exotic dancer in a public place and he wasn't a john.

CAR SALEMAN

And I have a car that gets a 1000 miles to the gallon.

(Eva turns to the Car Salesman)

EVA

What did you hear that night?

CAR SALESMAN

What's the matter? Afraid no one will believe little miss exotic dancer here?

EVA

I'm trying to make sure of the facts. There was a terrible miscarriage of justice, and I want to help make it right.

CAR SALESMAN

You have a lot riding on this case, don't you? Helping the Justice Department, helping the Asian community, helping that poor mother whose face has been in every single newspaper in Detroit for the last two years. You're just really helpful. I bet you think you can right all the wrongs of the world, all the little slights, anytime anyone ever looked at you the wrong way. I bet you think you're ready for the big leagues now, law school education, standing on high ground, breathing clean air, not like some of us in Detroit who have to sell cars for a living.

EVA

What do you remember Donald Evans saying to Vincent Chin on the night in question?

CAR SALESMAN

Me? (he thinks, than pointed) I didn't hear anything, I just stopped a fight.

(Lights down on Tommy, Showgirl, Car Salesman. Eva steps into the Chin home, Hannah is with Lily who is seated. Eva is exasperated.)

EVA

I'm sorry Mrs. Chin. The federal conviction was declared a mistrial. There's going to be a new trial in... in Cincinnati.

HANNAH

Cincinnati? What happened?

EVA

The district court ruled there was "intolerable prejudice" created against Evans by all the publicity surrounding Mrs. Chin, that Evans couldn't get a fair trial in Detroit.

LILY

What "intolerable prejudice" mean?

EVA

Virulent and inflammatory in intensity and duration—

HANNAH

Like beating someone to death with a baseball bat?

EVA

I'm really, really sorry Mrs. Chin. I was sure the conviction would stick, but we can still win.

HANNAH

Maybe the United Citizens for Justice should organize some demonstrations in Cincinnati.

EVA

I don't think there will be time. They're going to retry quickly so we can't prejudice the jury pool.

LILY

"Intolerable prejudice?" I don't understand. I have to speak out or Vincent forgotten, killers go free. They say I speak out too much?

EVA

Once this second jury hears all the facts, they will bring a conviction. We just have to... to go through a whole new trial in Cincinnati. I'm sorry.

HANNAH (to Lily)

You'll have to listen to the evidence about what happened to Vincent again, Mrs. Chin. You don't have to go, if that would be too painful—

LILY

No hear, no see, no feeling. The way killers leave Vincent. Brain dead. They don't want to hear us. Don't want to see us, don't want us to feel. They want us invisible. Brain dead. Don't be heard, don't be seen. (beat) White snake puts out tongue.

HANNAH

What?

LILY

Like this.

(Lily does the Tai Chi move White Snake puts out tongue.)

LILY

This hand go for throat. Move life force to fingernail, sharp like ax to wood. I go to Cincinnati trial. I make them see me again.

(Lights down)

(Lights up on Tai Chi demonstration. This time Vincent is acting as the teacher, the Sifu is the pupil, doing "wave hands like clouds.")

VINCENT

The hand which is above descends, and the hand which is down comes up. The leg which bears the weight becomes empty as the weight shifts to the empty leg which in turn becomes full. The arms continually describe circles, large or small, the hands continually move through the globe-holding positions of Yin and Yang. No movement is complete in itself: it is always becoming something else, moving toward its opposite. And the end is not an end, but the beginning of another movement.

(Lights up on split scene. On one side of the stage are Katz, Evans, and Stetz, on the other side, Hannah, Eva, and Lily. The two sides do not interact, though they may address the audience or speak to someone on their side.)

EVANS

I know I never called him a motherfucking Nip. I told you I'm no racist.

LILY

What mean mother Fukien? I not from Fukien, I from Gaungzhou.

EVANS

I was just drunk, I didn't single him out because of race.

STETZ

He calls lots of white guys motherfuckers, too—

EVANS

SHUT UP MARK—

EVA

The defense is going to make it sound like race had nothing to do with it.

EVANS

He never said he wasn't Japanese cause race never came up. He said he wasn't a motherfucker.

HANNAH

But the worst thing Evans could have said to Vincent was to call him a motherfucker. That's a terrible insult to a Chinese son.

EVA

Vincent reacted to racial slurs.

KATZ

Chin simply over-reacted to non-racial name-calling and threw the first punch.

HANNAH

Of course he would react. Vincent was extremely dutiful and respectful to his mother. He was a filial son.

STETZ

Could have called him an asshole instead—

EVANS

SHUT UP, MARK—

EVA

A witness heard the baiting. She said it was racial—

HANNAH

It was cultural—

EVANS

It wasn't nothing personal—

STETZ

It was an accident—

KATZ

Not everything is about race.

EVA

He practically called him a Jap—

STETZ

Gook—

EVANS

Nip—

HANNAH

Chink—

LILY

What difference what word he use? HE KILL MY SON.

(Change in lighting. Eva, Hannah, and Lily are seated on one side of a courtroom, Evans and Stetz, sit on the other. Katz stands, delivering his closing address to the jury, the audience.)

KATZ

And in conclusion, the jury must see that this was a tragic event that had nothing to do with racial hatred, but everything to do with two men who had way too much to drink. You have seen the evidence, you have heard the tapes. The prosecution has not delivered on its promise, to prove beyond a reasonable doubt, that Donald Evans willfully singled out Vincent Chin because of his race, color, or national origin. And that is all you are being asked to decide. My client has never denied what happened on June 19th, 1982. He has never attempted to jump bail, break his probation, or tried to run away from his responsibility in the four long years it's taken to process this case through the justice system. He is extremely remorseful over what happened and will continue to live with that fateful night for the rest of his days. I ask you to judge Donald Evans as you would judge yourselves. Look at the man before you, a man who has never had a criminal record, who has a family to support, who like all of you, has worked all his life, tried to be a good father, tried to make amends for his past mistakes. He has already been sentenced for the crime he committed, he has paid his debt to society and continues to pay every day of his life. Enough is enough. I ask you to find Donald Evans: Not Guilty.

(The lights go back to the split scene lighting, with the two sides separate as before)

HANNAH

What do you think the jury will do?

EVA

I don't know, they're inscrutable. There's not one Asian face on it.

EVANS

So what do you think?

KATZ

I think I hit a home run.

LILY

Nobody look me in eye. Look through me like invisible. They not see me, not see Vincent.

STETZ

The white guy on the end looked right at you, Don.

HANNAH

Is there anything more we can do?

EVANS

What if I'm found guilty?

LILY

What if he go free?

EVA

This is it.

STETZ

Will this be it?

KATZ

This is it, as far as I'm concerned.

HANNAH

The jury's back.

EVANS

Then this is it.

(Lights change back to courtroom. Lily, Eva, Hannah seated on one side, Evans, Stetz, and Katz on the other. A judge's bench is wheeled with the Judge behind it.)

JUDGE

Will the defendant please rise?

(Evans and Katz rise, Stetz remains seated)

JUDGE

Will the clerk please read the verdict?

(The clerk enters)

CLERK

The Southern District Circuit Court of Ohio, in the case of the United States vs. Donald Evans in violation of section 18 United States Constitution 245(b)paragraph (2)(F), on the charge of wilfully injuring, intimidating, and interfering with Vincent Chin on account of his race or national origin, we the jury, find the defendent, Donald Evans: Not Guilty.

JUDGE

The defendant is hereby acquitted of all charges. Mr. Evans you are free to go.

(The judge pounds his gavel. The clerk and judge exit with the judges bench. Stetz jumps up and high fives Evans, Katz congratulates him, the three celebrate. The three women on the other side of the aisle are stunned. Lily in particular cannot move, she simply stares straight ahead. The three men finish their celebration and start to exit, passing by where the three women sit. For the first time there is actual face to face confrontation. Eva and Hannah stand and make eye contact with the three men, Lily ignores them. There is a tense silent moment, then the men continue on their way.)

HANNAH

There's got to be something we can do.

EVA

I don't know what to say, Mrs. Chin. I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

(Lily doesn't respond to Eva or Hannah, she is in her own world)

LILY (v.o.)

How can I live in America with that kind of law? My heart is dim. How can I live in America with that kind of law? My heart is dim. How can I live in America with that kind of law?

(Hannah and Eva step away, leaving Lily alone. Sound of Chinese woodblock. Lights change. Lily picks up a wooden sword to do Chinese sword play, her moves are strong, sure, punctuated by the Chinese woodblock, and though she starts off slowly, the sword play gathers momentum. Vincent Chin enters the light leading Stetz and Evans with their hands tied behind their backs and placards around their necks, in the way Chinese criminals in the 1940s were paraded publically before their execution. Vincent leads the two in a circle stopping before Lily and forcing them to kneel. Vincent exits. Lily stares at the two killers sword in hand. A Chinese woman warrior enters the light, the legendary Fa Mu Lan who takes revenge on the killing of her family. Fa Mu Lan takes the wooden sword from Lily. After circling the two men and demonstrating her prowess with the wooden sword, she takes batting practice, taking a few practice swings, knocking the dirt from her slippers, spitting on her hands, then Fa Mu Lan steps up to homeplate and with one slow motion swing, beheads Evans and Stetz. The wood block sound stops. The lights flood red, then a rousing chorus of "Take me out to the ball game," is heard as Fa Mu Lan raises her sword in triumph. The lights slowly fade to black.)

EPILOGUE

(Lights fade up on Hannah and Lily in the Chin home, 1987. Lily has a suitcase at her feet an airline ticket in hand.)

HANNAH (referring to suitcase)

Is this the last one?

LILY

Never say last, bad luck, Hannah.

HANNAH

You're not ever coming back?

LILY

I cannot live where my son life have no value. Nothing left for me here.

HANNAH

What are you going to do in China?

LILY

I think of something. What you going to do, Hannah? Find husband? Or career?

HANNAH

Actually, I found a career. I want to work in civil rights, continue what we started. Vincent united Asian Americans all across the country against discrimination. He showed us that we aren't treated equal. I want to continue to speak out, be seen, the way you said, stick with it.

LILY

Umm, I write to you, Hannah. I tell you if I find nice, Chinese boy.

(Hannah embraces Lily)

HANNAH

I'm going to miss you.

LILY

You good girl, very helpful all the time. Thank you, taw jeh.

HANNAH

Thank you. We'd better get started, you have a long journey ahead.

(Lily and Hannah exit as the lights dim. In the dim light, one by one, the entire cast assembles. They are seen in silhouette. We hear wind chimes, an erhu or a peipa. The ensemble stands taking the position of the opening stance in Tai Chi. A light comes up on Hannah as she reads a letter from Lily. Lily enters and stands in front of the ensemble, she leads them in the first set of Tai Chi.)

HANNAH

Dear Hannah. Vincent Chin Recreation Center in my old village doing very good. Many young people come. They call me Grandmother Chin, make me smile. You find husband yet? Remember, don't wait too long. I teach young people Tai Chi, teach them to breathe in and out, teach them balance, respect, I teach them to use Chi, the life force. I teach them, "Carry the Tiger to the Mountain."

(The cast continues to do Tai Chi. We can hear them inhaling and exhaling. They continue the movement as the lights slowly fade to black.)

END OF PLAY