

ABE YOU THERE SINGAPORE?

A Play

ROBERT YEO

FIRST PERFORMANCE

This play was first performed in Singapore at the Cultural Centre, Canning Rise, from 24th - 27th July 1974.

The cast consisted of:

Ang Siew Hua	.	.	.	.	Esther Leong
Ang Siew Chye	.	.	.	.	Lim Kay Tong
Richard Lim	.	.	.	.	Raymond Ong
Sally Tan	.	.	.	.	Wrisney Tan
Giorgio	.	.	.	.	Jamshid Medora
Marcello	.	.	.	.	Wee Soo Cheang
Sarah Aitkens	.	.	.	.	Susan Nairn
Fernandez	.	.	.	.	Gulam Husain

The producer was Prem Kumar.

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

ANG SIEW HUA, undergraduate, 1st year at London
School of Economics

ANG SIEW CHYE, her brother, a law undergraduate

RICHARD LIM, postgraduate student

SALLY TAN, undergraduate

GIORGIO, Italian, 2nd year at London School of
Economics

MARCELLO, Giorgio's friend

SARAH AITKENS, Richard's girlfriend

FERNANDEZ, friend of the Singapore students

ACTS

ACT ONE

Scene One: Angs' flat. Evening, about 7.00 pm.

Scene Two: Same. Morning, about 8.30 am.

ACT TWO

Scene One: Giorgio's party. Late evening.

Scene Two: Angs' flat. Evening, 6.30 pm.

ACT THREE

Scene One: Angs' flat. Morning.

Scene Two: Same. Evening.

Act I. Sc. 1

Small sitting-cum-bedroom of the Angs. On the left of the stage, a small bed belonging to CHYE. On the right, a convertible settee. In the centre, a small table with 2 bowls, 4 plates and chopsticks. A bookshelf with some books stands behind the settee. In the middle of the stage, to the left, is the kitchen; the inside right is where the door is.

TIME: About early November. HUA, mini-skirted, is sitting on her brother's bed, looking impatient, glancing at her watch. CHYE is reading a magazine.

HUA What time did you tell him, Chye?

CHYE About seven-ish. It's ok, Hua. 5 past only now. (HUA goes to the kitchen, then emerges. Longish pause.) Bo you think it's worth the while Hua? Coming all the way? Try and forget him.

HUA It's not so easy. I'll try just once.... and anyway I haven't come here just to see him again.

CHYE That's what you say. This is just like you. eh Hua? Always acting on impulse. In the last six months, do you know, he's not once really asked about you? All he says, if he knows I'm writing home, is 'Give my regards to Hua*' That's what it is, Hua. Regards only. And last week - (Knocks on door) Well, here he is! (Goes to door, opens. Enter RICHARD LIM) Regards in person. Hi. how's the regarder?

RICHARD Re- what?

CHYE O nothing. How's the troubadour?

RICHARD Ok, except in the stomach. Must be the rhubarbs I fired last night. Bloody Pembroke Hall food. Rhubarbs, rhubarbs ... 3 times a week. How to survive in London?

CHYE Don't joke, lah. You'll survive, all right. Anyway what, you think the English will give in so easily?

RICHARD Not quite, not quite... (Hands overcoat to CHYE)

CHYE You mean, no. So try again man. That's what you're here for, eh?

RICHARD Surely. (Sees HUA. Turns to her) Hello Hua?

HUA Hi. What happened last week. We were expecting you.

RICHARD I'm sorry about that Hua... after all your cooking. I told Chye -

CHYE O, I told her. She knows.

RICHARD Really, Hua -

HUA (Sweetly) It's ok, Richard. But this time you must finish the food. You know what?

RICHARD What?

HUA Your favourite. Fish curry and khiam chai soup?

RICHARD Yum, yum, lead the way, lead the way ! (They all trail into the kitchen. RICHARD re-emerges, carrying a pot, followed by CHYE with another pot, when they both place on the table respectively)

Hot, hot curry. Whew! You don't know how lucky you are, enjoying home-cooking. I'm going to use my hands.

CHYE Naturally, lah.

RICHARD Shaddap, man! I mean the curry, lah. You're lucky about food, but don't take it too much for granted.

CHYE What lucky! What about you staying in the Hall and all those English birds. Not to mention Continental and Commonwealth ones. Every night international cuisine !

RICHARD Come on, man. Give me a chance. This is only the start of my second year here -

CHYE And isn't one year enough? To... to, as you say, test the permissive society? I say, this is London, lah, not Singapore. Just to quote you. (HUA emerges with the rice. She dishes out to the men, Richard first)

HUA You must eat. Specially cooked, you know.
 (Smiles sweetly at RICHARD. Gives helping to
 her brother and then herself . They all sit
 down, RICHARD and HUA on settee)

RICHARD So, how has the term begun, Hua?

HUA Getting more interesting day by day. You know,
 the demonstration is this Sunday. And we're
 all meeting at the School in the morning.

RICHARD Well, it's good to see you getting into the
 thick of things - after only 2 months here.
 Since when?

HUA What do you mean, since when. Since ... since
 recently !

RICHARD Must be very recent. Are you marching with them?

HUA I think so. But do you think I ought to?

RICHARD Why not? If you haven't been to a demonstration,
 it's interesting. Surely !

HUA But I've been to one!

RICHARD Which one?

HUA The one against the Greek junta.

RICHARD What, were you there? How come I didn't see you?

HUA I saw you.

RICHARD I don't believe you.

HUA You were with a blonde girl with blue mini-skirt.

RICHARD (Smiles) Yah, that's right.

HUA What's her name, Richard?

RICHARD Sarah. You must meet her, Hua. She's very friendly,
 you know, very, very

CHYE Of course-e ... All your birds are ve-ry , ve-ry, and
 mini mini in their resistance. Testing, testing.

RICHARD Don't listen to your brother.

HUA But I think he's right. (They exchange knowing glances) Anyway are you going?

RICHARD Going? (Pause) O, you mean the Sunday march. Yes, of course. I don't think the English students have many grievances. I mean, if you compare them to American, French or German students. But the fact is, they are young people, young spirits revolting against old values. You know, ageing gods like de Gaulle and LBJ. So I think the students are doing something worthwhile. (Pause) Besides, they are demonstrating against Vietnam. I think we've got a stake there, somehow.

HUA I suppose so. (Spots RICHARD's empty plate) More?

RICHARD Yes, please. Must be your curry.

HUA Wait. I'll get some warm rice. (Goes into kitchen)

RICHARD Chye, you're too much, man. Do you have to talk like that in front of Hua? All those insinuations?

CHYE She knows, lah. She knows about your new ways. She even knows you are going to a pot session tonight with some bird. Tottenham Court Road.

RICHARD Surely, I'm only going to see what actually goes on when hippies get high. I'm not going to smoke the damn thing ! But how come she knows?

CHYE I don't know. (HUA emerges with a pot)

HUA Here we are. (Goes over to RICHARD and dishes out)

CHYE Yes, Hua give him pot, not just more rice. This is London man. (RICHARD looks remonstrating at CHYE)

HUA Pot? Pot? What do you mean?

CHYE Pot lah. Not the pot you're carrying. I mean. Hasish, marijuana. For dreaming of white birds, even if you can't have them. Not for the moment, at any rate.

(HUA looks at RICHARD puzzled)

RICHARD What your beloved brother means, Hua, is that I'm going to a smoking session.

HUA Are you? Tonight?

RICHARD That's right.

HUA And you are going to ... (HUA looks at him
 incredulously)

RICHARD No, I'm not. O, come on Hua, don't look at me
 like that. I'm not going to be a drug-addict
 just because I go there. I'm just curious to
 know what it's all about. I'm sure I'm going
 to dislike it, but I've got to know.

CHYE Know, know! Why are you so damn concerned about
 knowing, eh? You can judge for yourself, all
 this unnatural stimulation -- for teenagers, man.

RICHARD I agree, sure. Artificial titillation is correct.
 That's why I know I'm going to dislike it, but I
 want to be sure, that's all. But as long as you
 know what you're doing and are disciplined enough
 not to go again, I don't see the harm. My grand-
 father was an opium addict. He used to take me to
 his smoking sessions and I used to watch amazed
 as he smoked himself away. O, I can still remember
 the smell of the opium burnin.* He was -

HUA How could you even ... (In a mumbling voice)

RICHARD I beg your pardon? Hua, I'm not taking it, just
 looking in. (HUA turns away, silent for a while)

HUA Even then. How can you be sure you won't make
 it a habit?

RICHARD Habit? Of looking at people getting high? Hua,
 thanks for your concern, but I know enough of
 myself. I think I know what can be tried and
 what cannot.

CHYE Sure, try, try. Whole life of experiment !

RICHARD Why not? Life is sometimes an experiment. And in
 this place you get a chance to experiment with things
 you cannot do at home. I don't mean just going to a
 pot session, we've had opium back home for more than
 a century. I mean values, values which ought to be
 tested. Tested, surely. Not by doing something
 silly like swimming the channel. That sort of thing
 is too costly. But little adjustments to new situations,
 you know, this way you find out a little more about
 yourself - and your environment. (He turns to HUA,
 addressing her earnestly) Singapore was comfortable.
 You get so used to it. But its different here. No
 point trying to live the same life here, thousands
 of miles away. Like importing a little bit of
 Singapore here, comforting ourselves with letters,
 chilli-powder, blachan ...

(Pauses. HUA looks at him almost from under her eyes. RICHARD puts down his plate and touches her lightly on the shoulder, saying gently)

You know HUA how my mum used to pamper me. She was worried and thought I wouldn't survive a month here. Even your father thought so. Who to cook for me, who to wash my clothes, how to keep warm.... These are not problems, Hua, merely simple adjustments. But there are other problems. Problems of adjustments too, but more difficult. And they must be faced.

HUA What problems, Richard?

RICHARD You'll find out, if you stay here long enough. But I'm not going back two years later, with another degree, the same fellow that left Singapore. (Pause) I've begun to feel myself changing already.

(HUA is quietly impressed. Sits down silently. Pause. Then excited knocks are heard on the door)

CHYE I'll get it. (Moves across towards the door. Opens and SALLY TAN is seen almost pushing through) Hey, hello Sally. What's the excitement?

(SALLY is a little breathless. In overcoat and long scarf. Her skirt is noticeably long below the knees. She appears relieved to be in)

SALLY Good lord ! Thanks for letting me in, Chye (HUA and RICHARD stand up and go over to greet her)

EDA Hi, Sal, what's the matter?

SALLY That man! Good lord. He's following me --

RICHARD Man, what man?

SALLY That Italian at the party. He insisted on sending me home. (She sneezes suddenly, 3 or 4 times) Excuse me, I think I've caught a chill. (Sneezes again)

CHYE Here, give me your coat, but keep the scarf. (Helps her)

SALLY Thanks. (She is just about to sit down when knocks are heard on the door. SALLY takes flight and scampers for the kitchen) Good lord, that must be him. Please, please Hua, if he asks for me, just say I didn't come here. He must have seen me coming in. Just say I didn't come.

(Disappears. The remaining three look at one another bemused. RICHARD opens door. GIORGIO comes in.)

GIORGIO Excuse me, I am -

RICHARD George! What are you doing here?

GIORGIO O hello Richard. It's you. I - I was looking for Sally. She had no one to send her home. So -

RICHARD Sally? I don't know who you mean. But come in, come in. And meet my friends. They live here. Come in. (He moves in) Chye, Hua meet my Roman friend, Giorgio. George, two friends from Singapore. Slew Hua. (Giorgio bows)

GIORGIO How do you do? (HUA extends her right hand which is kissed by Giorgio)

RICHARD And her brother, Soon Chye. (They clasp hands)

GIORGIO Hello.

CHYE Come in. Please sit down. You must excuse us, we've just finished dinner.

GIORGIO Not to worry.

CHYE I'll just clear up. You talk to Richard and Hua.
(CHYE removes the plates and pots. The other 3 sit down, GIORGIO next to HUA)

RICHARD We met in Rome last year, on my holiday. Now George is here studying at the LSE. Hua's just arrived, and is studying there too.

GIORGIO O, is that so? Very good, very good. And do you like it so far? No?

HUA Yes. very interesting (GIORGIO looks at HUA quizzically)

GIORGIO Excuse me, but I think I have seen you somewhere. At the Economist's bookshop last week - I think it was Thursday - a little funny incident, you remember?

HUA O you mean when Carol lost her scarf and thought -

GIORGIO That it had been stolen? (HUA laughs lightly; GIORGIO too) But I merely borrowed it. Yes?

HUA It was so funny, wasn't it? (laughs again) She was ready to throw her books at you. She was late and waiting for the tube.

GIORGIO So you were her dark-haired friend, yes? Excellent, excellent. It is - how the English say it - super, yes - it is super to see you again. Really I only borrowed Carol's scarf because Maurice asked me to. You perhaps have met him?

HUA Maurice?

GIORGIO The bambino with red hair. He took Carol home in his car.

HUA O, yes, I know.

GIORGIO Well, you know, they are good friends. More than good friends. It was all --

(Several loud toots of a taxi's horn is heard)

GIORGIO O yes, yes, I have forgotten. The taxi outside. Most sorry. Gentlemen, please you will excuse I must go now. See you later Richard. And you, Siew Hua. (Kisses her hand deliberately) It is a pleasure. Perhaps we will meet again. Yes?

(Departs. HUA is holding her kissed hand suspended in mid-air)

RICHARD Well, Italian, what do you expect. (CHYE emerges from kitchen)

CHYE Hey, where's he?

RICHARD Gone. You can tell Sally its safe. She can come out now. Funny, do you know what his surname is? Nero.

(HUA smiles, goes in, comes out with SALLY)

SALLY Good Lord, I'm glad he's finally gone. Did he ask for me?

RICHARD Like hell! He was roaring with passion. We had a helleva time controlling him. Didn't we, Hua?

HUA You bet.

SALLY How did you get rid of him?

RICHARD O hell! (Shakes his head) I didn't get rid of him. If I had *my* way, we'll all leave this room and look you up with Giorgio. With Nero I mean. So he can fiddle ...

HUA I thought he was rather charming, Sal. And he only wanted to send you home.

SALLY But the way he talked to me -

RICHARD And you are afraid of him merely talking? (Looks at her incredulously) What's wrong with you Sal? Why are you so mortally afraid of men here? I've never known you like this at home. You're always running away from, from.... as if, as if you fear to lose something - I don't know.

SALLY One of them tried to kiss me the other day, pretending he was drunk. I -

RICHARD What happened? What happened? (In mock eagerness) Did you lose it?

SALLY I beg your pardon?

RICHARD I said, did you - O hell, never mind. How did he do it - I mean what did you do?

SALLY His friend pulled him away in time. I -

RICHARD And rescued you. Congratulations on preserving your virtue. Well done, well done!

SALLY O Richard, stop talking like that. (Glares at him) I'm going to sit over here. (Sits next to HUA)

RICHARD You know, I'm just about to give up. You know its true, what I say. You remind me of a sea-shell that's been marooned on shore and remains shut like a steel-trap. Oblivious of the environment. I think it must be the Catholic in you that makes you so inhibited. It doesn't happen to the Italians. They know there's another meaning to the word Catholic, surely.

(SALLY, uneasy, adjusts her long skirt. It is well below the knees)

RICHARD And look at the length of your skirt. And look at Hua's. She's been here about 2 months compared to your 15 months here. O hell, every one's gone mini except you. I hope they won't think over here that most girls back home dress like you do. The tourist's won't come. At least not the young men.

(Everyone is quiet; RICHARD senses he's said enough) OK, I'm finished. (Stands up and looks out at the window)

CHYE What about some coffee?

HUA Oh, I'll put the kettle on.

SALLY I'll give you a hand, Hua (They both go into the kitchen. CHYE turns to RICHARD)

CHYE Not its my turn, Richard. What the hell is eating you, talking to Sal like that.

RICHARD She's wasting her time here just - O hell! Forget it, Chye, forget it man. It's damn hard to explain. I'll only make myself angry. (Short pause) What's new about the withdrawal business Chye? Has it gone beyond the proposal stage?

CHYE I think so. I even heard the PM's coming here to argue our case?

RICHARD Really? When's he coming?

CHYE He's here already- there's something in "The Times" (The girls come out, HUA with a pot and SALLY with cups, saucers and the rest on a tray) Black for me, please. And sugar.

RICHARD White, please. (Cups are handed round. Then, knocks on the door) Who can that be? (Goes to door and opens. Enter Vincent Fernandez) Hi, Fernandez.

FERNANDEZ Hi, Richard (Looks around) Hey, what's this? Parliament in session or what? Where's the speaker? And have you sung Majulah Singapura? No? Hey-y-y, won't do man, won't do.

SALLY Fernandez, please, do you have to do that again?

FERNANDEZ Hello, who's that? (Pretends to peer, hand shading his eyes) Well, Miss Opposition herself. Hey, do you know she used to be Dr Lee Siew Choh's secretary at one time?

SALLY Yes, but that was before he went over to the Barisan.

FERNANDEZ And what's wrong with that? Are you ashamed of him?

SALLY No, but that was years ago.

CHYE And anyway, we have other problems now. More important issues, I mean.

FERNANDEZ What do you mean more important issues? You mean the fact that we have no opposition to Lee Kuan Yew is not important? At the moment I'd much rather talk about Lee Siew Choh or Lim Chin Siong than about Lee Kuan Yew. You know, I get THE MIRROR every week, mind you, every week, without fail. And all I read about are the great things the PAP is doing for the people. Nothing about the opposition. We've a one-party state, man.

CHYE No, not a one party state, but a one-party situation. There's a difference, you know.

FERNANDEZ What difference?

CHYE Well, the difference is that, in a one-party situation, the dominant party is returned to power in an elections involving several parties. The PAP is not the only party allowed to function in Singapore. We had elections. You know that.

FERNANDEZ Sure, I know that. But what sort of election? The opposition parties were intimidated. That's why the Barisan decided to opt out and go underground.

RICHARD What, you mean the Barisan dropped out of elections because they were intimidated? Just like that?

FERNANDEZ Of course! That's why the party didn't field a single candidate. There must be a reason for the main opposition party to drop out completely.

CHYE I don't buy your argument. The Barisan refuses to contest an election, no one prevents the party from fielding candidates, and you blame the PAP for it. Is that fair? But let's get back to the subject before you came. Do you know why the PM's here?

FERNANDEZ Sure, I do. To consolidate his party in power.

SALLY You talk like one of the Barisan cadres -

RICHARD Talk like one, Sal? Don't you know he's a Barisan member? Why don't you show them your membership card, Fernandez?

FERNANDEZ Sure, I will, only I haven't got it here with me. But look, man, I'm the first guy to admit the PAP's done some good work, but all this breast-beating, all this bit about being a rugged, disciplined society, is a bit too much, lah? I mean, singing the National Anthem in school every morning, saluting the flag ... (Pauses, looks around) Have you ever been to a cinema outside the West End? One of those royalist strongholds. They'll play 'God Saves' at the end of the show and the couples will be marching out hand in hand, thinking of the last tube and the first bedroom. That's fashionable. And here you are, on that little island, at the toe of Asia, singing Majulah every morning in schools, cinemas - maybe even in government offices. Doesn't make any difference, I tell you. Another Lee Kuan Yew stunt!

CHYE I say, Fernandez, cool down, man. Sit down, sit down. Have some coffee, eh? (Indicates to HUA, who goes to the kitchen to fetch another cup)

FERNANDEZ Sure. But don't bribe me out of the subject.

CHYE No, No such thing. But do you have to be flippant? I mean, the English can afford not to care about being loyal - they can take for granted. -

FERNANDEZ What do you mean take for granted? What about the Scottish Nationalists and the Free Welsh Army? They don't let Harold Wilson take them for granted. But he doesn't go around fanning nationalism, carrying 'England for the English'. What will happen to people like you and me?

RICHARD But there's no need to. We are not here permanently, you know. Maybe it's different for you.

FERNANDEZ Maybe, maybe not. But the Scots and the Welsh are staying in England. And liking it too. Yah-ah!

RICHARD But their problem is different from ours. They agitate for equality in an established country. We have to build a new nation. We -

CHYE Of course. And respecting the anthem is one way of inculcating loyalty. Especially after separation from Malaysia. How else to create a sense of belonging?

FERNANDEZ Get back into Malaysia, lah!

CHYE Come on, man. (Remonstrating impatiently)

SALLY O-o-o you, Fernandez. (In despair almost)

RICHARD Let him go. You know who he reminds me of. You remember that crazy bloke back home who wrote and sang his song about Malaysia on TV and was damned disappointed his song was not a hit?

FERNANDEZ Why not? If Lee Kuan Yew had done a bit of singing, he wouldn't be coming here now bothering Harold Wilson. And we would be singing that lovely jingle 'Malaysia forever ten million strong!

lights dim

Act I, Sc. 2

The Ang's room as before. CHYE's bed is neat. The room is empty. There is a cup of coffee on the table. It is Sunday, about 8.30 in the morning. Knocks on the door. Pause. Knocks again and a woman's voice softly calling 'HUA, HUA' Pause. Door opens slowly and SALLY comes in. Looks around, puzzled.

SALLY Hua - (Sits down on the settee and looks at her watch. Then picks up a newspaper, lying on the settee, and reads the SUNDAY TIMES (or OBSERVER). Reads for a while. Hua then comes in, and shows surprise at seeing SALLY)

HUA Hey Sal, what are you doing here?

SALLY Have you forgotten? We're going to Church.

HUA Are we? (Absent-mindedly) O yes, I forget. Sorry Sal. Oh, we'll go. You had breakfast?

SALLY Thanks, I've had. (HUA drinks her coffee)

HUA But have coffee.

SALLY No lah. When we come back. We're late.

HUA Is this all right? (HUA looks down adjusting her skirt and pullover. SALLY nods) Anyway, you know who was on the phone just now, just before you came?

SALLY Who?

HUA Your Valentino, Who else?

SALLY Who do you mean?

HUA Giorgio, lah,

SALLY O, him. Good lord! (Pursing her lips, looking sideways)

HUA Anyway, he's throwing a party next fortnight. He wants all of us to come.

SALLY I see first.

HUA O-oo he's all right, Sal. Anyway, I've never been to an Italian party. Must be good fun, meeting more Italians. If they are such good lords. (Door bursts open and in comes RICHARD, a little breathless)

RICHARD Hi girls, come on, let's go!

HUA Where are you going to?

RICHARD What do you mean where? Today is D-day, you know.

HUA D-day?

RICHARD Yes! Demonstration Day.

HUA But today is the 17th?

RICHARD That's right. We are meeting at the Union, remember. But anyway, you've got nothing going on. So let's go. (HUA looks at RICHARD apologetically. He looks at her puzzled and then looks at SALLY) What's up? You're both not going shopping? Not on Sunday.

SALLY Don't be funny, lah, Richard.

RICHARD O-oo (Realizing) I might have known. Sal-l -, please, not today. Any day except today!

 (SALLY looks down silently as HUA goes up to her)

HUA Richard's right. Shall we go another day?

SALLY It's all right. You go. (HUA looks helplessly at RICHARD)

RICHARD Look Sal, I'm not a religious chap, you know. But do you realize what the demonstration's about? Every student in London must be converging on Trafalgar Square. And you want to converge on Church. You know -

SALLY I haven't been to Church for the last 2 Sundays.

RICHARD Surely, but there's the next Sunday. But there won't be another demonstration so regularly (Looks at her earnestly. She remains silent)

 Give me a chance. O hell! There's going to be lots of Sundays like this, Sal. You know what we're demonstrating about? Do you? VIETNAM. And there's only one Vietnam. No more Vietnams (Pause) Or at least, I hope so. And I intend to demonstrate that hope. Not pray for it!

 (He turns away from her, facing the audience, hands in both pockets. Then turns to HUA)

HUA You'll come, HUA ..

 (HUA looks undecidedly from him to SALLY and back to him. SALLY's face is turned downwards. HUA holds out her hand to RICHARD, who takes it. They both make for the door,

leaving SALLY alone and forlon. She goes to the door, and was about to close it when sounds of people demonstrating and shouting are heard. These sounds of protest get louder. SALLY opens the door and goes out. Half a minute later she comes in and closes the door behind her. As she walks towards the sofa, knocks are heard on the door and voices calling 'Siew Hua, Siew Hua.' SALLY goes to the door. A voice is heard to ask, amid more sounds of protest)

VOICE Execuse us, but we're looking for Siew Hua. She lives here, doesn't she? We're off to Trafalgar Square.

SALLY Oh, she's gone there already.

VOICE Oh, has she? Well, we'll be on our way. Are you coming too?

SALLY No thanks, not today.

ANOTHER
VOICE Not today, blimey. Not today. What other day is there?

(They leave and SALLY closes the door after them. Sounds of protest retreat. SALLY looks at her watch, ruminates a little and decides to sit down. She appears disturbed by what has just happened and fails to hear more sounds of protest outside the room which gets louder and then subsides. She then looks around for a piece of paper, finds it among a pile of magazines and scribbles a note hurriedly. She leaves it on the sofa in a conspicuous position and then goes for her overcoat. But knocks on the door and someone shouts 'Telephone for Chye'. Sally opens the door and goes out.

Within seconds, Chye saunters in, looking puzzled at the open door. Sees the scribbled note, reads it. Sally oomes in and shows surprise at seeing Chye)

SALLY Oh, Chye, there was a call for you. But when I got to the phone, it was silent. Must have run out of sixpences.

CHYE Yes, I suppose, every student whose demonstrating is calling his buddy to swell the crowd at Trafalgar Square. Did any of them come here?

SALLY Yes, a group of them asked for Hua.

CHYE Where's a - Hua?

SALLY O, he's gone off to Trafalgar Square.

CHYE I see. (Pause. Then suddenly, almost fearfully) Alone?

SALLY No, Richard came.

CHYE But why didn't - I mean, weren't you both supposed to go off to Church? (SALLY nods, but looks glumly at CHYE, who notices with averted face. Then suddenly turns to speak) What's bothering you, Sal?

SALLY I - I feel so guilty, not going to Trafalgar Square ... and worse still thinking of going to Church on such a day. When Hua's friend came and they asked me if I was going, I said 'Not today'. (Pause) Do you think we should go, Chye?

CHYE I was feeling the same way too. Seeing the demonstrators outside and their placards and banners ...

SALLY I kept thinking about what Richard said.

CHYE What did he say?

SALLY No more Vietnams, he said. No more Vietnams. That he would demonstrate that hope, not pray for it.

CHYE I think he's right, you know. I wish I could associate myself more with what goes on here. Sometimes I get so wrapped up with myself, I become apathetic. (Pause) Here they are in London, thousands of miles from Vietnam and violently crying it's all wrong, all wrong ... And we, so near to Vietnam, we sit here and talk about it, detached from it. (Sighs) How come we are so, so uninvolved, Sal?

SALLY I don't know. Last week, the L S E students were collecting anti-war signatures to be sent to Washington. They had this huge book where you just go in, sign your name and write down the name of your country. I was just outside the building, but I didn't sign. I just don't know why I didn't.

CHYE My college chaps demonstrated outside the American Embassy last week and I didn't go too.

SALLY O you mean the one where quite a number of students were crushed, including the policemen? There was a Times editorial about it yesterday, I think ...

- CHYE Yes, that's the one. I don't think its the violence that prevented us from joining the demo. I think its because I'm just not used to marching for a cause, I guess. (Pause) Do you think its because of our education, our comfortable English education back home?
- SALLY English education? (Pause) Do you think its because of our education?
- CHYE I'm pretty sure. If you compare, you know. the activist record of the English-educated with the Chinese-educated back home . . . What the hell, there's no comparison. I can count the number of times the English educated have demonstrated for anything at all.
- SALLY C'mon, Chye, don't be so hard on ourselves. Remember the Enright affair in 1960? Didn't you demonstrate on the upper quadrangle?
- CHYE Sure, I did, but that was not a demonstration, really. Even then, some of us gathered out of a feeling of obligation, rather than because we feel we were genuinely defending some principle. We had to show to the PAP, which didn't think well of the English educated, that we, the sons of the English educated, could also rise for our rights. I suppose we were also indirectly telling our parents, who had their salaries slashed when the PAP came in, look we're not too bad. You know the feeling against the English educated at that time, that they were a privileged, protected lot under the English. Some of us have still that mentality. (Pause) I think I have it, still. But look at Hua. She's been here about 4 months only, and already she's full of what's happening here. Why is she different, Sal?
- SALLY Maybe its because of Richard. You know what he's like.
- CHYE But he's like us, too, English educated.
- SALLY I know. But you forget his mother is Chinese-educated and she's had quite a lot of influence on him. Besides, he's so open to all kinds of new things. I think he's serious about them, like this demonstration, but sometimes I got the feeling he regards them as novelties.
- CHYE Perhaps. I should be glad, in a way, that Hua's getting into the thick of activities here in London, with Richard and all. I haven't had time to show interest in her activities, what she get's involved in . . . I don't even think I've been a good brother.

SALLY But even at home, you've always left her on her own. You used to say she could always take care of herself, didn't you?

(Then suddenly a commotion is heard which gets louder and becomes obvious just outside the door. Muffled cries of 'Slowly, slowly' and groans are heard. The door opens. Enter HUA head in first, supported by RICHARD and another man, both holding her shoulders)

What happened? Hua -
(She is seen to be badly bruised, black marks on her face, arms, fingers bleeding. Her skirts are torn badly)

RICHARD The demonstration. Hell! She was trampled.

CHYE Trampled! But how did it happen?

RICHARD Let's place her on the sofa first.
(CHYE takes his sister's shoulder as the other man withdraws. SALLY removes a pillow from the settee; HUA is laid, SALLY carrying her right leg on to the sofa. CHYE props the pillow against his sister's head. She groans and CHYE bends over her and SALLY kneels beside)

SALLY Are you hurt?

HUA My arm-m -- (She attempts to move her right arm and winces in pain) Oo-o-h -

CHYE Let's have a look.

RICHARD We were all listening to the speeches - standing beside one of the lions. There were groups of people waving banners and flags. They were shouting together. Before we know anything, there was a scuffle and, and ... in front of us - the whole crowd was upon us. O hell! It happened just like that. I think Hua must have been pinned against one of the lions. I was on the other side of the lion. She appeared to be hurt and looked groggy. She was almost on the ground and I found this under her. (He held up a half-furled red banner with white paint scrawled on it. It unfurls with the words MAKE LOVE, NOT WAR)

Act II Sc 1

GIORGIO'S party. Dim lights reveal about 7 couples dancing uninhibitedly to Beatle music.

Spotlight on left of stage shows RICHARD LIM seated, watching the dancers. An empty chair next to him has a lady's handbag on it. Spotlight to the left, extreme left where 2 men are seated, with a girl in the centre, all 3 on the floor which has a rug. One of them appears to be talking to her, his right arm on her shoulder. To extreme right of stage, spotlight on a long settee, with 2 couples on it. SIEW HUA is seen seated on Giorgio's lap and he has his right arm around her waist. On the right, SALLY is talking politely to MARCELLO, friend of GIORGIO.

Music changes to soft. The couples cling. The couple nearest to RICHARD break up, the man goes towards RICHARD and removes the chair and hands him the handbag. RICHARD tries to indicate that it belongs to someone. The man waves his hand as if to say, its all right. SARAH AITKENS appears, looking for her chair and handbag. She looks around.

Someone switches on the light. It's slightly brighter now. RICHARD is seen attempting to hide the handbag behind him. SARAH finally turns to RICHARD. Couples continue dancing.

SARAH Hellow, where's my chair?

RICHARD That bloke there. (Indicating the back of the stage with his left hand)

SARAH Has he got my handbag too? (She locks at the direction pointed. She is in a mini-skirt. RICHARD looks her up and down appreciatively)

RICHARD It's ok. There are worse things one can lose. (Sarah turns around suddenly)

SARAH What's that you said?

RICHARD I said, its ok, you won't lose your handbag. Here it is. (Retrives handbag and hands it to her. She takes it)

SARAH That's not what I heard. Something about worse things... (Clouts him gently with her bag. He pretends to cower)

RICHARD Worse what?

SARAH Are you going to tell me or not? (Sits on his left knee and pulls his tie playfully) Or do I have to pull it out of you?

RICHARD Do you always sit on your friends like this?

SARAH Yes, when they deserve to be sat upon. (Twist his tie around his neck. He tries to prevent her)

RICHARD Hey you know, this is supposed to be Giorgio's birthday party. What a coincidence! It's my birthday too, today.

SARAH Truly? (He smiles at her and nods) O, why didn't you say so. Happy birthday then! (Flings her arm around him and kisses him briefly) How's that for a present?

RICHARD Great. (He embraces her and they kiss again)

 (Spotlight switches on to GIORGIO and HUA on the settee. They are toasting one another, glasses in hand, his right hand holding her left. Both raise glasses)

GIORGIO Cheers!

HUA Cheers!

GIORGIO What shall we drink to?

HUA To Edinburgh

GIORGIO Of course, but of course. To Edinburgh (They click glasses)

HUA When are we leaving, George?

GIORGIO We leave on Sunday, in my car.

HUA Are we stopping on the way?

GIORGIO For you, anything. (He smiles at her, then counts his fingers) We shall stop at Cambridge, yes? (She nods) Coventry? (She nods) Carlisle? (She nods) One in each place; and on the 4th day, I think we shall be in Edinburgh.

HUA And Marcello is coming, is he? Who is he inviting?

GIORGIO Ah, that we shall wait and see.
(Waves his hand and indicates MARCELLO and SALLY talking and standing to the right of the stage, apart. Spotlight on them now)

SALLY I'm sorry, but I don't think I can come. Thank you.
(She walks away; MARCELLO gently pulls her back)

MARCELLO But, but you have not told me why? I must insist, please.

SALLY Well, I have something to do in London. Besides the new year -

MARCELLO Yes, but we are going during the holidays. It is better to enjoy yourself now, yes. Otherwise, the new year and then, plenty of work (He gestures dramatically to indicate plenty of work)

SALLY No, thanks, really Marcello. Besides, I promise to do something for *my* tutor. (Gestures in mock despair. At this stage, GIORGIO appears, apparently to attend to his guests)

GIORGIO Hello there, Sally, how are you? I'm sure Marcello is taking good care of *my* lovely guest.

SALLY Marcello and I were just talking -

GIORGIO What, only talking. In my party - ah no, no that will not do. (Prods MARCELLO knowingly) Marcello, you have not been entertaining my guest, yes. And look at you? Not even a drop to drink. Come, I must get you a drink, yes.

SALLY No, thanks Giorgio, I just had a drink.

GIORGIO Yes, but I do not see a glass. A glass of Martini is what you need. Of course, of course..... (He turns. SALLY raises her hand to protest)

SALLY But Giorgio, please I ... (She turns to MARCELLO, pleadingly) Please tell Giorgio something light, not Martini.

MARCELLO Something light? Pardon...

SALLY A soft drink, please.

MARCELLO Ah, soft drink, yes, yes. (He goes off)

SALLY Martini! Good lord! (RICHARD, glass in hand, comes over to greet her)

RICHARD So, it appears you are doing well with your Italian admirer at last.

SALLY Doing well, good lord! He just met me and you, know what? He's already invited me to spend the holidays with him in Scotland.

RICHARD Great! What are you waiting for. Week-end with Valentino - lucky girl!

SALLY What on earth -

RICHARD I'll tell him you'll accept. (Turns around) George, hey George!

SALLY Hey, Richard no, not -

RICHARD Yes, of course. George! (SALLY tugs at his sleeve)

SALLY Richard, it's not Giorgio, its Marcello.

RICHARD O, is it? Ok, hey Marcello, Marcello ...

SALLY Richard, no please - are you mad? (Tries to pull him back)

RICHARD Marcello! (SALLY is now practically clawing at him, pulling his tie, trying to close his mouth)

SALLY O you, you (He tries to remove her arms; struggle; his glass spills on to his trousers) Don't ever talk to me again.

(SALLY goes to A corner and sulks. RICHARD ruefully wipes his trousers. MARCELLO appears with 2 glasses in hands and sees RICHARD)

MARCELLO What happened? (RICHARD continues to wipe his pants but indicates by a shake of his head SALLY sulking in the corner. MARCELLO sees her and goes towards her) Ah, Sally, here is your drink. Something soft, as you say; I think it is an orange.

(SALLY accepts silently. Glares at RICHARD and then turns away, indifferent to MARCELLO, who shows increasing concern)

You will please tell me, Sally. What is the matter between you and Richard? You had a quarrel, perhaps? (SALLY temporarily recovers from her anger)

SALLY Quarrel? Oh no, no ... we were just teasing one another.

MARCELLO Teasing? What is that please?

SALLY O, nothing, just, just fooling around. (Then suddenly) Marcello, can you take me home afterwards?

MARCELLO But of course, but of course ...

(RICHARD, who has all the time been attending to his pants, overhears and shakes his head. SARAH approaches him now. Spotlight on them now)

SARAH What happened, Richard? (RICHARD indicates SALLY by a turn of his head) What, have you been needling her, again? (RICHARD nods) O, why can't you leave her alone? (RICHARD shakes his head)

RICHARD I don't know. I guess I just can't. Something about her just bugs me. I, I .. (SARAH takes hold of him and leads him to the other side of the room)

SARAH C'mon, let's go over here, and leave her alone for a while. C'mon. (They go over) What have you done? You must have provoked her badly.

RICHARD I suppose so. But every time I see her behave like that, so, so pristine, you know, I'm tempted to taunt her (Pause) She's missing out on a lot of things. If only she would at least respond to *my* remarks.

SARAH Well, she did, didn't she?

RICHARD I don't mean that way. She's, she's not setting a good example to the other girls from Singapore that come this way. There's more to it than just coming here to study at some college. I mean, look at Hua.

SARAH Who Hua?

RICHARD Yes, Hua, you know, the Chinese girl with Giorgio all the time.

SARAH Is she the one that's sweet on you?

RICHARD Yes, that's her. You've met her, haven't you. But she's no longer hung up on me. And I'm glad. There's no point - there are so many other interesting blokes. But I like her attitude - that's openness for you. She at least does not cry 'Are you there, Singapore?' She knows she's in London. Surely!

SARAH And do you? (Said cheekily)

RICHARD Of course, And you? (Slightly twitching her nose)
But I guess I better go. My's jacket's in a mess. Are you coming.

SARAH Yes. But are you sure that's the reason why you want to go back?

RICHARD Don't kid yourself. You know the reason. You are the reason. (SARAH smiles knowingly)

SARAH Am I? (RICHARD puts his arm around her waist)

RICHARD At least I know you're not like Sally.

SARAH Are you not going to inform Giorgio?

RICHARD Surely, if I can find him. (They look around for a while among the dancing figures and see him on the inside of the stage. They walk towards him, RICHARD calling)

RICHARD George, George! (GIORGIO comes to meet them with HUA trailing behind, holding hands) I should have known I'd find you with her. (GIORGIO holds on to HUA affectionately and smiles) But George, we'll have to go.

GIORGIO O, no, you're not going, no, no ... (Gestures in mock despair)

RICHARD Really, I must. See. (Shows his wet jacket)

GIORGIO What happened?

RICHARD Shhh! (Pointing to SALLY and MARCELLO talking)

GIORGIO O, I see ... Well, I understand, all right, ok

SARAH Ta-ta, Giorgio.

GIORGIO How very good of you to come. (Sees them both to the door)

RICHARD Bye, George, see you, Hua. (Winking to George) And you'll take good care of her, eh?

(Leaves with SARAH. Lights out)

Lights dim

The Ang's room. Door opens to admit CHYE and RICHARD. CHYE switches on the lights. There is revealed a small X'mas tree in the corner. Slight strains of X'mas music is heard.

About 6.30 pm. About 1 week before X'mas, and 3 months later.

CHYE Come in, Richard, make yourself at home.

RICHARD Ok, thanks. How long will Hua be in Edinburgh? Hey, didn't she go up to Edinburgh sometime ago, after Giorgio's party?

CHYE No, that time they went to Wales instead. Anyway she's due back in the new year.

RICHARD Is she? I hear the Scots think the world of New Year. That's what they make whisky for. But who did she go up, eh Chye? If I'm not too curious?

CHYE You'll be surprised if I tell you this - but I don't know.

RICHARD I don't believe you. (Quietly) You mean to say, she didn't tell you?

CHYE No - I think it's because I didn't ask. (Pause) Once or twice I thought, by the look on her face, she wanted to tell me. But ... You know, Richard, frankly I'm concerned about her, I don't mind telling you. Even a little worried. After the demonstration, she seems to have become, become ... not wild, but a little unrestrained in her behaviour.

RICHARD O -

CHYE You know, receiving phone calls almost every night, coming back late, neglecting her work. Many times, I wanted to ask - I thought as an elder brother, I ought to.

RICHARD It shouldn't be difficult?

CHYE It shouldn't but it is. I don't want her to think, just because I'm older .. I don't want to tell her - she might misunderstand and think I was keeping an eye on her.

RICHARD But I'm sure she can take care of herself, if I know Hua.

CHYE I hope so. But as you are never tired of saying. This is London. And in London ...

RICHARD But when did she, or why did she become or feel so free?

CHYE You mean you don't know?

RICHARD No

CHYE You are the cause, you are the cause, lah!

RICHARD What d'you mean, Chye?

CHYE I don't mind telling you - you are the main reason why she's here. Mind you, I'm not blaming you.

RICHARD But that was over even before I left Singapore surely.

CHYE Yah, but not with her. I don't know. I suppose women take a long time to get over this sort of thing.
(Richard is silent for seconds)

RICHARD I'm sorry, Chye. I didn't suspect that - I mean I know -

CHYE C'mon, no need to apologise. She's finally getting over it, as you can see - in her own way. (Smiling bravely) Anyway, where are you off to, tonight. Sarah?

RICHARD No, man.

CHYE What happened? She ditched you, eh?

RICHARD Well, sort of, lah. She moved to a new address in Harmondsworth, promised to keep in touch. Next thing I knew, I had a card from her from Geneva.

CHYE Geneva?

RICHARD Yah. Apparently has an aunt there. Gone for 3 weeks. Bloody female! Just as our relationship was getting interesting.

CHYE Why worry, why worry. Sunggoh jauh, hati dekat. How do we say it? Absence makes the heart grow fonder, eh?
(Pause) Anyway, there tonight, what. Who's this new bird?

RICHARD Italian chick I met at a party one night.

CHYE Au pair girl?

RICHARD Yah, they are the best, man. You know what her name is?
Gina.

CHYE Wah! (Pursing his lips) So you are going prepared, lah.

RICHARD Surely, I'm always prepared. See what I mean? (Throws
him a packet of contraceptives)

CHYE C'mon lah, don't tell me you use this?

RICHARD Of course, what do you think? I can't afford -

CHYE I don't mean that. I mean, now the girls are on the pills
and this sort of thing is supposed to be old-fashioned.

RICHARD Maybe so, but I'm taking no chances. I can at least be
responsible.

CHYE Sure, you are responsible, who else ...

RICHARD I don't mean that way, man. I mean sex needn't
be irresponsible. (Looks at his watch) Hey, 6.15
already. Better push off.

CHYE Ok, but, hey, why don't you stay here tonight. Hua's not
in and I'm working late tonight

RICHARD Good idea. But you'll have to pinjam your pyjamas.

CHYE No problem. Enjoy your continental cuisine, whatever it
is. Spaghetti, ministrone, ravioli ...

RICHARD Ravioli, my choice, man (Crosses his fingers and leaves)

CHYE Boy, am I hungry. (Makes for the kitchen; reappears to
switch on the transitor and disappears again into the
kitchen, X'mas music, sound of carols, is heard for about
2 minutes)

(Door suddenly opens and HUA enters, with a
suitcase. She wears a scarf and overcoat.
Hair wind-blown. Closes door softly after
puttying down her suitcase and looks around.
Picks up suitcase, places it on settee,
opens it and goes through her clothes.
Extracts yards of tartan material which she
spreads out and examines quietly. CHYE
reappears, whittling - but stops short
when he sees her)

CHYE Hua-a! What are you doing here? When did you come in?
(HUA stops examining the tartan; slowly turns to face
her brother, speaking softly but firmly)

HUA Just now.

CHYE But I thought you were not due back till next week?

HUA I know.

CHYE What happened?

HUA Happened? Nothing happened . I just decided to come back early. Christmas is next week, after all.

CHYE I know. But you were all set to spend it at Edinburgh, remember? Not like you to break a holiday you were crazy about. Hua-a? (Her name pronounced softly, coaxingly. Silently HUA folded her tartan)

HUA We decided to spend X'mas here. It's ... rather quiet in Scotland (Her voice trails away)

CHYE We? You know, I don't even know who you went up with ... or who you went to see.

HUA You never ask.

CHYE I do not. I take the view that its your business. You know that, even at home. But after the demonstration -

HUA That was an accident.

CHYE All right, you couldn't help that one. But after it - I mean lately - you've been acting so independent -

HUA What do you mean acting?

CHYE Ok, I take it back, I mean, you've been aloof, coming back late nights, never saying where you were going. When you get up late in the morning, there were days sometimes when I don't see you at all. (Pause. HUA remains silent) And all the time, I said to myself, it's ok, she can take care of herself.

HUA I'm not so sure now. (She gets up to the front of the stage, facing the audience, but looking downwards) Chye, I'm pregnant.

CHYE What? (In a soft, disbelieving manner)

HUA Yes, two months already.

CHYE Who's the - I mean how did it happen - Why, why did you do it?

HUA I didn't, I tell you. He did it!

CHYE I know. But -

HUA You might as well know who.

CHYE Who?

HUA Giorgio

CHYE Giorgio?

HUA Yes, Giorgio.

CHYE Giorgio! You mean the block who ran after Sally the other day! (HUA does not even nod) But why him? I should have guessed ... If I'd known he was that sort of bopper, I would have ... (Paces up and down angrily) Hua, why didn't you tell me you were going up to see him? You told me you were just going with some friends.

HUA Isn't he a friend?

CHYE Friend? To do this! I should have asked who you were going to see. I mean ... to think that Sally was responsible for him coming here and meeting you.

(Pause, Goes up to her as if to confront, then holds back)

How could you do this Hua? What a Christmas present?

HUA I'm sorry, Chye. (Breaks down suddenly) Oo - I'm sorry ... I thought, I thought we could solve the problem.. I wanted to tell you.. I.. I thought Giorgio would agree to .. I went up to see him, and of course he does not want the child ... and I thought, fine, I don't want the baby either ... But, but, how can I go through an abortion?

(Runs towards her brother, slumps upon him sobbing bitterly)

What shall I do?

(LIGHTS OFF for minutes)

About 3 hours or so later. CHYE reads fitfully. It is The Mirror he is reading; picks it up, reads a line or two and tosses it down. Paces up and down, picks up a magazine and tosses it down again. Knocks on the door. CHYE opens the door and lets in RICHARD.

CHYE Come in.

RICHARD Thanks (Throws himself on the settee in disgust. CHYE closes the door)

CHYE So, what happened?

RICHARD Nothing! Nothing! Here's the stupid evidence. (Throws the packet of contraceptive at him. CHYE examines it and shakes his head. RICHARD takes off his overcoat)

CHYE If only someone else had been as discreet. (RICHARD walks around looking for a place to hang his coat. Didn't hear CHYE's last remark)

RICHARD You know, I wanted to tell her I desire her white body, I have wet dreams about it, but -

CHYE I know what you mean, I think. You can't say it?

RICHARD Say, say, that's what's bloody wrong with me! (Slumps on settee in a huff) I don't have to say things like this. I'm just supposed to do it. But how the hell can you tell - Tell! Give me a chance! Say, tell, nothing but bloody words. I mean how can I suggest it - I tried, you know - without actually saying 'let's do it? It surely sounds crude, doesn't it. Except in the pictures. This sort of thing happens damn easily in films. (Sings mockingly) Let's do it ...

CHYE It's funny, isn't it? You can't have your sex and its a problem. You have sex and it's a problem. What sort of place is London anyway?

RICHARD I don't get you. If you have it, but be careful, why should it be a problem?

CHYE What about consequences?

RICHARD You mean babies? (Door behind opens slowly, HUA is seen emerging. She stands unnoticed behind, listening. She is in her nightgown)

CHYE Yes, if they come out at all.

RICHARD O, no, no. I be careful if I do it.

CHYE That's perfect. Easier said than done man. But you can't always be careful.

HUA My brother means me.

RICHARD (Turns around suddenly) HUA! (Looks at CHYE, a long look) But I thought you were in Edinburgh?

HUA Yes, but I decided to come back. (Walks towards the front of the stage) I'm worried about my baby. (Almost defiantly)

RICHARD Baby?

HUA Yes. (Tapping her stomach) Baby here. (RICHARD, very surprised, looks at CHYE again. CHYE nods)

RICHARD I'm sorry.

HUA I'm sorry too. For baby. What shall I do to him? Since George doesn't want him and I don't want him.

RICHARD So it's George, is it?

HUA Yes, it is George. And he does not want baby. What shall I do to him?

RICHARD Do to him? Hua you're not thinking of an .. abortion....?

HUA I am. The more I think about it the more it means the only way out. What shall I tell home?

RICHARD Why doesn't George want the baby?

CHYE You're kidding, you don't expect him to want it?

HUA (Very distressed) It?

CHYE No, no - I say that merely because I don't know the sex. Hua, do you have to be so touchy? I've been telling you, we've talked this over before Richard came - there's no other way out but this. I know its brutal. But think of the folks back home. Think of Pa and Mummy. The news that you are pregnant - and by a white man - will hit them so brutally ... Especially Mummy. All the things she's been saying before you came here. Besides if you continue in your studies, can you afford to have a baby?

HUA You know I can't.

CHYE So, what choice have you? Look Hua, it's December now. Your exam is not till late June. This year, isn't it? If you're going to have the baby, by June or July you'll be in no condition to sit for it. And how are you going to explain to home?

RICHARD Why not be straight with your parents. Tell them the news.

CHYE That perfect, ha. (Slightly snorting) Richard, you don't know *my* mother. Every time she hears that one of us has been out with some English girls she goes into fits. If she hears about Hua, she'll collapse.

RICHARD I know what you mean. But she'll have to take it eventually. If anybody has to suffer it better be the older folks. They've probably been through quite a lot already and one more - it will hurt them - but they're tougher than you think, surely.

HUA You think so, Richard?

CHYE But what are you saying Richard Lim? Something happens to us here and they are made to suffer back home? That's perfect!

RICHARD (Deliberately) Would you rather Hua suffer by going through an abortion?

CHYE I don't know. It does seem unjust that they should bear the brunt of what we do. If Hua goes through the abortion and the folks at home are not told, we may be able to cover up here.

RICHARD But Chye, why do you talk about unjust, about covering up something, something guilty. What has Hua done that is so wrong that it must be covered up? I admit she sought to have been more careful. And I, I should not have praised her for being able to adapt herself quickly to London. But it's done, a life has been conveyed. (Pause) You know, it's really not *my* business, but as a close friend and I would advise against an abortion. But it's really Hua's decision.

HUA (Goes up to RICHARD and touches him gently on the shoulder) Thanks Richard. I really agree with you so much. But what Chye says about the folks at home (Looks helplessly at her brother)

CHYE I'll make some coffee, ok? Excuse me. (Goes to the kitchen)

RICHARD Whatever you decide to do, Hua, I ... I like to be able to help ...

HUA O thank you, Richard, thanks. (Leaves her head on his shoulder. He gently takes her in his arm and comforts her)

RICHARD Talk to me if you like. It helps, I think.

HUA I don't know what to do if you're not around. CHYE reminds me so much of my father .. Stern, upright ... What will he say, I wonder (Pause) You know what he'll say. You should have continued with Richard. He always thought I broke up the relationship. He likes you a lot.

RICHARD Hua -

HUA Oh I'm not blaming you. (He holds her closer) I'm only glad you're around now, Richard.

Act III Sc 1

The Ang's flat. HUA is seated, reading. Not yet big-bellied, but her pregnancy is plain to see. Reads for a while. Knocks on the door. Hua rises, goes to the door and lets in SALLY.

TIME: Late March.

HUA Hi Sal, come in.

SALLY Hey, how are you? I saw these lovely oranges and bought some. (Gives oranges to HUA who receives them)

HUA Thanks. Sit down, Sal. I'll just put these in the kitchen. (SALLY sits down. Sees what HUA has just been reading and thumbs through it. HUA comes out)

SALLY So I see you are making preparations to be a mother. (Indicates book)

HUA O, that. It was given to me by a classmate at School. You know Harry. He's a pacifist and was one of the speakers at the demonstration last time. Remember? (Realizing suddenly) O, I'm sorry, Sal, I forgot you didn't go.

SALLY Benjamin Spock. Spook. The name is familiar, isn't it Hua? Where have we heard it?

HUA O, he's the most famous name to American mothers. His book on child-care is used in most American homes -

SALLY Yes, but he's been in the papers recently about something else.

HUA Yes, he's on trial now. He's been accused of helping to resist draft laws on Vietnam. Harry says Dr Spock will probably be found guilty and jailed. It's going to be hard for him, at his age - he's 70 plus I think. What does the book say, Sal?

(SALLY picks up the book; a letter falls out, a blue airletter)

SALLY O, I'm sorry, Hua. It's all right, I'll pick it up. (Picks it up and hands it to HUA) From home, Hua.

HUA Yes, from my uncle Seng. He wants to know why I've stopped writing.

SALLY It reminds me, Hua. I thought I saw an airletter with a similar mark as I came in. Shall I go to get it?
(Gets up. HUA looks at her almost pleadingly and lets out a small groan)

HUA O-o-o ...

SALLY I'm, I'm sorry Hua, if you'd rather not ...

HUA Perhaps you'd better get it, Sal. It's been there for 3 days already. I've been dreading to read it. It's ... from my father. I recognise his writing.

(SALLY gets up and goes outside. Hua goes over to the table, picks up a letter-cutter and returns to the sofa. SALLY comes back)

SALLY Yes, Hua, I'm afraid its from your father.

HUA Please read it for me, Sal. Here (Hands her letter-cutter. SALLY cuts open the letter)

SALLY You sure you want me to.

HUA Yes.

SALLY Well, ok. (Takes letter out and reads) "My dear Hua, I am disappointed in not hearing from you in 3 months. Your brother writes regularly and says you are well, but will not say anymore. I hope everything is all right. I expect you to write and tell me yourself."
(Pauses and looks up)

HUA Please go on.

SALLY "Your mother is well and getting herself excited over the coming big event in our family. You will be the first to know. Geok is getting married in a month's time and she and Kai Cheng hope to upend their honeymoon in London..."

HUA O, God, no, no ... Are you sure, Sal, are you sure?
(Goes over to SALLY) O let me read it myself. (Takes letter and reads. Then closes her eyes as if trying to concentrate. Reads letter again wiping her eyes. Then stares with wide eyes at SALLY. SALLY looks at her ruefully, then stands with hands outstretched as if to comfort. Hua slumps on the sofa, face downwards. SALLY looks on helplessly)

SALLY Hua, what are you going to do?

HUA I don't know.

SALLY Hua, why don't you, why don't you.....?

HUA Do what Sal?

SALLY Good lord, I don't know whether I should say this or not ...

HUA Please, Sal, what are you trying to say?

SALLY Why don't you go away somewhere when Geok and her husband come here. You can say that you have to go away on a course-work outside London. (HUA is silent, head bowed) This is one way, Hua, if you don't want them to know, Hua.

HUA You think it will work Sal? They'll never believe me. Anyway how can I do a thing like that. Geok'll never forgive me if (HUA seems lost in thought. Folds the letter she's still holding almost unconsciously.)

SALLY But Hua, what choice have you?

HUA I have a choice, Sal, though its not mine.

SALLY What choice?

HUA Abortion.

SALLY ABORTION!

HUA Abortion, yes.

SALLY You mean ... (Horrified look on her face)

HUA Yes (Firmly)

SALLY Hua, no, you can't mean it ... You can't, can't take away a life, just like that It's, it's ... (Turns away) It's not right. Hua its ... its sinful, Hua, to take a life.

HUA But isn't it just as bad, what you are suggesting, Sal?

SALLY Yes, but that's different, Hua. But this, this ... you can't go through with it, Hua; after what the Pope has ruled

HUA You forget I'm not a Catholic, Sal. Besides, as you said ... (She gets up and goes to the front of the stage) I have no choice.

lights

Act III Sc 2

The Ang's flat as always. On a table, HUA is seen writing with stacks of books on it. She opens a book, flips through it and then closes it, obviously tired. Holds her forehead in fatigue, drops her pen on the table and leans back against her chair, apparently exhausted. Telephone rings and she gets up with some effort, and leaves the room with the door slightly open. Half a minute gone and RICHARD enters after knocking. He looks around, goes to the kitchen and then goes out, and then returns and sits down. HUA returns.

HUA Hi, Richard, you've just come?

RICHARD Yah, you left the door open, so

HUA O, yes. I was on the phone. That was my playmate, Giorgio. Anyway how's Sarah? I hear she's back in London. (RICHARD is taken aback by her inquiry).

RICHARD How did you know? I mean, about Sarah?

HUA O, Chye wrote to say so. You write to him, don't you?

RICHARD Yah.

HUA But how are you getting on with her, Richard?

RICHARD Sarah? O, hard to say. I like her, I may even be in love with her and -

HUA How does she feel about you?

RICHARD That's what I like to know. She range up just before I came. (Pause) It's so different down here. You know what I mean now, Hua. That I can feel this way, the way she just comes and goes when she pleases ... somehow I feel this is different from home. (Sits down) Down here, the girls are really emancipated. They are sexually equal with men. Un homme et une femme. You know that French film, A man and a woman. That's what it's like here. And its marvellous (Pause) You know what it's like back home. A girl allows you to make love to her on condition that she gets something for it. Marriage. Otherwise, don't you dare. Isn't it like that Hua? (HUA nods approval) Funny I don't know why I was not able to see through it. A boy lies down with a girl back home and she giving him something precious - her body. Surely. But what does he give in return? His soul, I suppose. (He looks at her, as if seeking her agreement).

HUA O, I agree with you, now, even though -

RICHARD Yah, men have no virtue to lose at home, only women. They are virtuous goddesses. Man, men are merely vulgar mortals who dare to do indecent things. No body to give, no virtue to lose.

HUA You've put it so well, Richard.

RICHARD Perhaps. But think of the frustration this sort of sexual ethic is responsible for Hua. For the sake of this medieval jewel called virtue, the majority of our girls back home repress themselves, frustrate themselves. That's why they are always more keen on marriage than man. But how are you, Hua? I'm sorry, I came to see you, not to come out with all these. (Pause) You said it was George just now on the phone?

HUA Yes, but I could never call him that now. Giorgio is more suitable. Not so familiar which sums up my feelings for him now.

RICHARD Excuse my curiosity, Hua, but you have not seen much of him since ... since you were like this, eh Hua? (HUA looks at him frankly, then lowers her head)

HUA No. The first few weeks after I found out about my pregnancy, we sort of drifted apart. I hardly see him at the School ... He will ring up now and then, but

RICHARD And tonight, just now?

HUA Rung up to say he's going back to Rome for some family matter.

RICHARD Is he coming back?

HUA He didn't say. I wanted to ask him, to ask him to stay - or at least say when he will come back, but ...

RICHARD You should have, Hua. I'll be happy to ask him about it, I know him quite well -

HUA No, please, Richard. Perhaps its better this way. (Hua lapses into silence. RICHARD realizes this part of their conversation is over and is silent too. Then he picks up The Mirror and flips through it. Pause for a minute) How's the situation back home, Richard?

RICHARD O, you mean, withdrawal and all that eh?

HUA Yes.

RICHARD Well, it sounds not too bad according to The Mirror here.

HUA What does it say about us?

RICHARD Let's see. (He turns the pages) Here, see Hua, there are 4 articles about the economic consequences of the British pull-out. (Hands 4 pages to her) 2 are optimistic and 2 pessimistic. (HUA looks through)

HUA Do you really think we could make it? If about one-quarter of our economy depends on the British spending, what will happen if Britain suddenly pulls out? Wouldn't there be mass unemployment and all that?

RICHARD (Looking downwards and walking thoughtfully) I really don't know. I really don't know what the hard economic facts are. Surely, there's going to be a lot of people employed by the British who will find themselves without jobs. I can think of two cousins, one working at Changi and one at Seletar. (Pause) Wouldn't it be ironic if I came home in 2 years time and couldn't go back to a Government job, eh? (Chuckled) But the next Mirror should be here any day. Let me see. (Goes out of the door and comes back, unclipping the latest Mirror) Hey, Hua, you won't believe it. (Waving the Mirror) See!

HUA Good old Mirror. You know, Richard, you are right, it still remains the best source of information about Singapore. (He hands the Mirror to her. She flips through while Richard sits down)

RICHARD Yah, it's a weekly, but comes so fitfully. Some weeks nothing, next week 2 comes, one from the High Commission here and one from Culture. Funny, even though the news is largely slanted pro- us, I always get the feeling, reading The Mirror that something exciting is always happening on that little island. Eh, what do you say, Hua?

HUA Yes, feel the same too. London's fun, but not exciting in the same way. I somehow do not feel involved, not even in that demonstration the last time. (Pauses, puts both palms of her hands on her belly, taps it twice, looking downwards) Except this involvement. Which is the wrong kind of involvement, a sexual involvement. I should have stuck to an intellectual involvement. The only time when I felt really involved was when I was a school debater. I remember once when we debated M.G.S and we were proposing and the subject was "Singapore has no future except as part of Malaysia". I really felt with it. I felt so not after speaking, I had to loosen the school tie. And now, this withdrawal thing and our economy endangered ... Even though I don't think I have relations or friends who are affected by it, I can't help feeling that somehow, I will be affected. That we'll all be part of it, we'll all get involved.

CHYE I know. But -

HUA You might as well know who.

CHYE Who?

HUA Giorgio

CHYE Giorgio?

HUA Yes, Giorgio.

CHYE Giorgio! You mean the block who ran after Sally the other day! (HUA does not even nod) But why him? I should have guessed ... If I'd known he was that sort of bopper, I would have ... (Paces up and down angrily) Hua, why didn't you tell me you were going up to see him? You told me you were just going with some friends.

HUA Isn't he a friend?

CHYE Friend? To do this! I should have asked who you were going to see. I mean ... to think that Sally was responsible for him coming here and meeting you.

(Pause, Goes up to her as if to confront, then holds back)

How could you do this Hua? What a Christmas present?

HUA I'm sorry, Chye. (Breaks down suddenly) Oo - I'm sorry ... I thought, I thought we could solve the problem.. I wanted to tell you.. I.. I thought Giorgio would agree to .. I went up to see him, and of course he does not want the child ... and I thought, fine, I don't want the baby either ... But, but, how can I go through an abortion?

(Runs towards her brother, slumps upon him sobbing bitterly)

What shall I do?

(LIGHTS OFF for minutes)

About 3 hours or so later. CHYE reads fitfully. It is The Mirror he is reading; picks it up, reads a line or two and tosses it down. Paces up and down, picks up a magazine and tosses it down again. Knocks on the door. CHYE opens the door and lets in RICHARD.

CHYE Come in.

RICHARD Hua, what? Too late for what?

HUA For an abortion?

RICHARD No - I mean no, you're not thinking of that, Hua.

HUA Isn't it the best way out? I went to see Dr Blak yesterday. Though I'd better prepare for the worst. He said the abortion could take place in a month. You know what else he said? There isn't a long waiting list, yet. You're lucky, he said. Lucky, huh!

RICHARD Hua, Hua -

HUA But all the same, he's not that bad, Richard. He advised against it. Said he would speak to Prof Harrison, the Dean, about my exams. Maybe they could make special arrangements just for me. (Pause) O Richard, I want the baby, but how can I when Is there only one way out?

RICHARD O, Hua, how can you talk like this? Hua, we've talked this over many times. Why should there be a way out? Why out? (Gets up, paces the room and continues earnestly.) Hua, please, forget Giorgio, forget your parents, forget your sister coming - forget them, Hua - think only of whether you want your child or not. (Pause) Please, Hua, don't decide in desperation.

HUA O, what's the use, what's the use? Giorgio's gone, Chye's not around, Geok and my brother-in-law are coming and they don't know ... and nobody ... nobody cares (Weeps suddenly, her head slumped on the sofa. RICHARD leans over, concerned but undiscouraged)

RICHARD Hua, please, its not that bad. You have friends - Sally's here. I'm around and ... Chye can come down any time.

HUA But why do I have to go through all this?

RICHARD But Hua, its done. It's done, already, don't you see? And the next best thing to do is to go through with it, Hua. Show that Giorgio bugger you'll manage without him, baby or not. The best answer to his kind of behaviour is to do what he least expects you to do, Hua - have the baby. (She gets up, turns around and seeks the comfort of his arms)

HUA I'm so confused now, Richard.

RICHARD Maybe I'm not qualified to speak being a man, Hua. But, but - you know Hua - I think this is the best way. I know you are worried about the folks at home, they'll talk like hell, they'll be scandalised. It'll be a one-month, perhaps two-months wonder, but they'll accept it. I know of a friend's sister in the same situation. And after it was all over and accepted, the mother was so thrilled at having a grandchild actually born in London.

HUA But Richard, that usually happens when the child is legitimate and.... well, Asian if not Chinese. My precious one will be illegitimate and by his looks, my relatives would know what I've been up to in London. It won't be easy at all.

RICHARD I know it won't be easy. I'm thinking of something else which just occurred to me. So you go ahead and have a baby here, and you'll very likely stay here in London for another year or two and by the time you get back, well, there won't even be a one-month, two-month scandal. Nobody would have heard of it at all. And if they did, say the father would be coming later.

HUA You really think so? (Softly said, almost pleadingly.)

RICHARD Yes, I do. Look, will it make you feel better if I tell you that Sally's coming later. We were talking, and somehow she sensed you'll be needing someone around. So, if it's ok with you, we've decided to take turns to stay here with you. Until Chye comes back at least.

HUA Are you both really going to do this?

RICHARD Yes, we've talked it over. What's there to prevent us from doing this?

HUA But I thought you were staying with Sarah?

RICHARD Surely, but she knows about you and she'll understand. Don't worry, Hua, you'll see.

HUA And is Sal coming tonight?

RICHARD Yes, we arranged to. She said about 9 or so. Should be here any moment now.

HUA O, it would be a lot better to have you and her around at this time. (Pause. Then knocks on the door) O, that could be her!

(RICHARD opens the door to admit not Sally but Sarah. Sarah has a small packet. She winks at Richard and goes to say hello to Hua.)

SARAH How are you, Hua?

HUA I'm all right, as you can see. Richard's been like a guardian angel to me.

SARAH So I see. (She says this archly and knowingly looks at him. Then hands over packet to HUA) I thought I'd bring a little something for you, Hua. Nothing much, but appropriate for the coming occasion, I hope.

HUA O, Sarah. Thanks a lot, its sweet of you.

RICHARD What is it, Sarah? Looks like a book.

SARAH It is! (HUA tears it open excitedly)

HUA Hey, look another book on child care and ... (Looks carefully at the cover) by Benjamin Spook. (Rubber nipple falls down. HUA picks it up). Hey look! (Dances excitedly) I can't go wrong, can I, with 2 such books. O thanks, thanks, Sarah.

(Goes up to Sarah and embraces her. RICHARD joins them in reciprocal embrace. Knocks on the door. RICHARD goes to the door and opens to admit SALLY).

RICHARD Come in Sal, come and join the celebrations.

(Takes her hand and hands a surprised SALLY over to the other 2 girls, who link hands with her and start to prance. A packaged present she is carrying drops on the floor. Richard links hands with them and start to sing "All You Need Is Love". The rest join in and begin to dance in circles, singing, "All You Need is Love".

c u r t a i n s