

An-Mei / Rose

TED. How the hell did we get married? Did you just say "I do" because the minister said "Repeat after me"?

ROSE. Ted ...

TED. I mean, what would you've done with your life if I hadn't proposed? Where would you be if I never married you?

ROSE. Ted. Did you hear me? I said I'll go. Or I'll stay. It doesn't matter.

TED. You're right. It doesn't matter, does it. *(Pause.)* I want a divorce.

ROSE. What?

TED. We'll talk when I get back. Don't try to call me. *(He exits. Organ music. An-Mei is sitting next to a few other Parishioners on a pew. Rose crosses and squeezes in next to her.)*

MINISTER'S VOICE. We are united here together — gathered in the house of God to pay our last respects to our dear, departed friend ... *(Continues under.)*

AN-MEI. *(Loud whisper.)* Already cremated. You see those flowers? Thirty-four dollar. All artificial, so will last forever. Janice and Matthew chip in some already. You have money? *(They stand.)*

ROSE. Yes, Ted sent me a check.

AN-MEI. A check? *(Rose begins singing a hymn with the rest of the congregation.)* Why he send you a check? *(Rose keeps singing.)* He is doing monkey business with someone else?

ROSE. I doubt it.

AN-MEI. Then why he send you check?

ROSE. I told you. We're getting a divorce. The marriage is over.

AN-MEI. If you think this, you must do something.

ROSE. It's too late. He's already had his lawyers draw up the papers. I don't have any choice.

AN-MEI. Always choice.

ROSE. Look, I don't think we should be discussing this right now. Not here.

AN-MEI. How come you talk with a psych-a-trick and not with mother?

ROSE. Psychiatrist.

AN-MEI. A psyche-a-trick only make you confused. Why you talk only with him?

ROSE. I don't. I've been talking with everybody. And everyone has an opinion. I don't know even what to *think* anymore.

AN-MEI. Reason you so confused, you born without wood.

An Mei / Rose cont'd

ROSE. Ma ...

AN-MEI. Is true. That is why you should listen to your mother. If you listen to others, you grow crooked and weak. You fall to the ground like a weed. Then you grow wild in any direction, until someone pull you out and throw you away. *(Rose abruptly gets up and starts offstage. An-Mei follows.)* Why can you not talk to your husband?

ROSE. Please stop telling me to save my marriage.

AN-MEI. I am not telling you to save your marriage. I only say you should speak up.

ROSE. But I don't have any choice! Don't you see? There's nothing I can do!

AN-MEI. This is not true. You don't speak, you making choice. You don't try, you lose your chance forever. I know this, because I was raised the Chinese way — to want nothing, to swallow other people's unhappiness. I know how it is to be quiet, to listen and watch. If you don't want to watch, you close your eyes. But when you don't want to listen, what can you do? I can *still* hear things that happened sixty years ago. *(Lights up on Mother of An-Mei. She*

is dressed for travel, and her suitcase is next to her.)

MOTHER of AN-MEI. An-Mei. Do you know the old turtle that lived in the pond? *(An-Mei nods.)* Once, when I was your age, Popo shouted at me for some bad thing I had done. That night, I sat by the pond, crying. This same turtle came swimming to the top, and his beak ate my tears as soon as they touched the water. He ate five, six, seven tears, and then he spoke. "I have eaten your tears," he said, "and now I know your misery." He opened his beak, and out poured seven eggs, which broke open. Out came seven magpies — birds of joy. When I reached out to catch one, they flew away, laughing. "Now you see," said the turtle. "Your tears do not wash away sorrow; they feed someone else's joy. That is why you must learn to swallow your own tears."

I must go. *(She stands.)*

AN-MEI. Ma! Ma! *(Auntie enters.)*

AUNTIE. See how your evil influence has already spread to your daughter!

MOTHER of AN-MEI. An-Mei, I am not asking you. But I am going back to Tientsin and you can follow me.

AUNTIE. A girl is no better than what she follows! An-Mei? *(Mother extends her hand.)* If you follow that woman, you can never lift your head again. Do you hear me?

End