

Year Zero

by Michael Golamco

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**

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**Originally Produced by Victory Gardens Theater, Chicago, IL
Dennis Zacek, Artistic Director; Jan Kallish, Executive Director**

**Produced by Second Stage Theatre, New York, 2010
Carole Rothman, Artistic Director**

YEAR ZERO was first produced by Victory Gardens (Dennis Zacek, Artistic Director; Jan Kallish, Executive Director) in Chicago, Illinois in September 2009 as part of their Ignition Festival of new plays (Sandy Shinner, Producer of Ignition). The performance was directed by Andrea J. Dymond, with sets by Richard and Jacqueline Penrod, costumes by Frances Maggio, lighting by Mary Badger, sound by Kyle Irwin, props by Grant Sabin, and fight choreography by David Woolley. The production stage manager was Rachel Robinson. The cast was as follows:

GLENN	Allan Aquino
VUTHY	Joyee Lin
HAN	Tim Chiou
RA	Jennifer Shin

YEAR ZERO was produced at 2econd Stage (Carole Rothman, Artistic Director; Christopher Burney; Curator/Associate Artistic Director) at the McGinn/Cazale Theatre in New York City in June 2010. The performance was directed by Will Frears, with sets by Robin Vest, costumes by Jenny Mannis, lighting by David Weiner, and sound by M.L. Dogg. The production stage manager was Lori Ann Zepp. The cast was as follows:

GLENN	Peter Kim
VUTHY	Mason Lee
HAN	Louis Ozawa Changchien
RA	Maureen Sebastian

CHARACTERS

GLENN

VUTHY

HAN

RA

SETTING

Long Beach, California

TIME

Spring, 2003

Special thanks to Kimhouy Tong.

Our revenge will be the laughter of our children.

– *Bobby Sands*

ACT ONE

(Long Beach, California. Spring, 2003. Summer is encroaching. The air is thick with heat.)

(The kitchen and living room of a small two bedroom apartment. Old couch, old appliances. A kitchen table, chairs, a small television set.)

(Two doors lead to bedrooms. A door goes to a bathroom. A screen on the usually-open front door keeps the flies out.)

(Around the room are shelves, upon which are arranged a massive collection of objects. These can be anything small, beautiful and fragile: Glass figurines of goldfish, porcelain figures of children playing, ceramic birds. They are not chintzy or kitschy – someone collected them, displayed them like treasures, loved them.)

(There are a lot of them. Dozens is fine, hundreds would be fantastic. Their presence is the primary feature of this room.)

Scene One

(Late at night.)

(VUTHY [*pronounced Woo-Tee*], 16, *Cambodian American, sits at the kitchen table. He is small, wiry-skinny, weird-looking. He has thick-ass glasses that look like they keep him from blowing away.*)

(He is facing a small human skull sitting on the table. He speaks to it:)

VUTHY. See, I told you you'd like it here. You didn't want to come at first, but see? Long Beach is all right. It ain't got that humid air that you're used to, but that's OK. It's good to keep cool.

So. I gotta ask you a favor. It's a big one, so I got an offering for you: I wrote you some lyrics. I hope you like them. I wrote them for you.

(VUTHY unfolds a piece of paper. He hits play on a tape recorder. It begins playing a recording of himself beatboxing.)

(to this he spits the following lyrics:)

I write lyrics like a Rasta rolls joints
Fools keep attackin / Tryin to take my hit points
I need more lives / Insert more coins
I'm improbable like Louis Farrakhan eatin a pork loin
Not afraid of death / Let me be a new man
Passin all your tests / Smart like a Vulcan
I break your choke hold / Give you a body slam
You chase me with your nose like you was Toucan Sam
I'm being run down / Always put upon
I'm put together well like my name was Voltron
I ride off in the snow on the back of a Tauntaun
With the devil yellin after me
Like Kirk is screaming KHAAAAAN

VUTHY. (*cont.*)

I live my life out
Squeezin out the most
Eatin all my toast
Cause all I see is ghosts
Everywhere I look, all I see is ghosts
All around me up in here, all I see is ghosts

(*He stops the tape.*)

I hope you like that. I wrote it over two trips comin
back on the bus.

(*beat*)

So here's the favor I gotta ask you: my ma is comin'
towards you, runnin' towards you. When you find her,
keep her safe, take care of her. Lead her to our ances-
tors. Her name is Chea Vichea (*pron:* Chay Vee-Chiah),
and she is my ma.

(*VUTHY hides the skull in a cookie jar, places it back in
its home above the refrigerator.*)

Scene Two

(Morning.)

(VUTHY eats cereal while putting the finishing touches on some homework.)

(RA, 22, his sister, comes out of the master bedroom. She is pretty in an academic way. She is carrying a basket of dirty laundry.)

RA. You're still here.

VUTHY. The bus don't leave til seven thirty five.

RA. You'd better not miss it.

VUTHY. I won't.

RA. You better not –

VUTHY. Well, I got a bowl of imitation Froot Loops that I wanna finish eating in silence.

RA. Where'd Ma keep the quarters.

(VUTHY points. RA searches through a jar of change.)

VUTHY. On the TV news they showed Angelina Jolie in Cambodia. She was blowin' up a landmine.

RA. Good for her.

VUTHY. She was in Samlot. You think Ma ever went to Samlot?

RA. I don't know.

VUTHY. You think Ma woulda ever wanted to go back an visit?

RA. I don't know, Vuthy. How would I know that?

VUTHY. I doan know.

(RA puts down the jar. No quarters.)

RA. You need anything washed?

VUTHY. No.

RA. You better not be wearing your last pair of underwear –

VUTHY. IT'S NOT MY –

RA. 'Cause I only got enough quarters for one load –

VUTHY. I got enough jockies to last through the rest of tha week –

RA. You're probably wearing them twice.

VUTHY. I told you I stopped doing that –

RA. Did you remember to put on your deodorant today?

VUTHY. I got the Post It note on my mirror that reminds me to – *DANG*.

RA. It's just that girls don't like smelly boys.

VUTHY. I fuckin' know that. *Shit*.

RA. You talked like this in fronta Ma?

VUTHY. NO. You agitate me.

(RA puts the laundry down by the front door, gathers flat and empty cardboard boxes.)

RA. You better be right home after school –

VUTHY. "You better you better" –

RA. The boxes are here, okay? Soon as you get back, you start packing. We've got to be out of here in a week. And tomorrow – are you listening? – we're gonna start taking your stuff over to Aunt Tizz's. Okay?

VUTHY. She ain't even our aunt.

RA. You know how much of a big heart she's got to open up her home to you?

VUTHY. She ain't even related to us. She's just a lady that Ma used to play cards with.

RA. Well you better be nice to her.

(She picks up the laundry, opens the front door –)

RA. She's really doing us a favor.

VUTHY. Hey you know I heard they got this real great comic book store in Berkeley –

RA. I already talked to you about this –

VUTHY. That's run by this beardo thass-all Nazi with the comics, and in there it's like a museum of art-Fort-Knox. He got the 1940 All American with the first appearance of the Green Lantern under glass. An if the beardo doan like how you look he hits a button and it lowers into a subterranean vault –

RA. It's the middle of the school year.

VUTHY. So what?

RA. So it would be bad to move you right now, put you in a brand new school –

VUTHY. So what.

RA. So you gotta stay here with Aunt Tizz.

VUTHY. I don't care if I move, Ra. I wanna move. They hate me at Lakewood High. I almost got shived last month –

RA. Shived?

VUTHY. Justin Vu tried to stab me with an extra-sharp pencil. And if I had just one more inch on my waist it woulda gored me in tha flesh.

RA. Why don't you tell the Principal?

VUTHY. What's that gonna do, Ra? These kids, they doan operate under the rule of laws. They Chaotic Evil.

RA. You have friends, don't you?

VUTHY. Bert moved.

RA. What?

VUTHY. Bert. My friend. Moved to Baltimore. And I'm too Cambodian for the black and Latin kids and I'm not Cambodian enough for the Cambodian kids.

RA. What does that mean?

VUTHY. *Look at me*, Ra. I doan look normal.

RA. (*laughing*) You look fine.

VUTHY. They all got this mad dogg stare down – this whatchoo-lookin-at-sucka stare. But whenever I do it my gently arching eyebrows betray me.

RA. Look: My place in Berkeley's just one bedroom and a microwave. We have a futon for a couch –

VUTHY. I can sleep on a futon. When you get up in the morning I'll have it all put back the way it's supposed to be –

RA. Vuthy –

VUTHY. You won't even know I'm there.

RA. There's stuff all over the place – Glenn's got all his things packed in there –

VUTHY. So maybe we can get a different place – a bigger place – I can work after school, chip in –

RA. No. I'm sorry. You've just gotta be patient, okay? It's only two more years 'til you graduate. Then you'll be in college and you won't need me.

(VUTHY stares at his cereal.)

(RA picks up the laundry, opens the front door.)

RA. Remember: When you get home, start packing. We've got to be out of here in a week.

(She starts to head out –)

VUTHY. Just so you know I gotta help Om Sang move a mattress up from the storage room.

RA. Well, you do that but afterwards you gotta pack.

VUTHY. I don't know if he told you, but they're lettin Han out today.

(She pauses in the doorway.)

RA. Oh yeah?

VUTHY. Yeah. They're lettin him out of the pen. Om Sang's pickin him up this afternoon.

RA. He's getting out of prison?

VUTHY. Yeah. They're setting up his old bed next door. You didn't know that?

RA. I haven't talked to the neighbors. Haven't been keeping up on things like that.

VUTHY. *(grins)* You used to.

RA. Uh-huh. Well, if you see him, say hi to him for me.

VUTHY. He'll probably stop by. Probably want to see you. *Definitely* want to see you.

RA. Quit grinning at me and eat your cereal.

(She exits.)

VUTHY. Bus ain't here for a while still. Gots plenty of time to savor the flavor of imitation Froot.

Scene Three

(That afternoon. The apartment.)

(RA wraps bowls and glasses in newspaper, carefully placing them in a box.)

(HAN, mid-20s, Cambodian American, sits at the kitchen table. He is tall, muscular, tattooed. Effortlessly handsome. He smokes, watches her.)

RA. How's your Pa?

HAN. A'ight.

RA. "A'ight," huh?

HAN. He likes watchin TV and thass about it.

RA. Stopped by the other day with some cookies.

HAN. Yeah, he said that. Thank you.

(short pause)

You look good.

(She puts an ash tray out on the kitchen table.)

RA. *(Re: the ashtray)* So you can stop using that wet paper towel.

HAN. Thanks.

RA. I'm not dumping that out for you by the way.

(short pause)

HAN. How's college?

RA. Eh – I don't know. I'm three weeks behind everybody by now. They probably want to fire me at work.

How was prison?

HAN. *(smiles)* Fulla angry fools.

RA. They let you out though.

HAN. I'm not so angry anymore.

There's a "Welcome Home" party at Eddie Diep's tonight if you wanna go –

RA. With all your TRG gangster friends there? I don't think so.

HAN. If you said yes I woulda been surprised.

RA. You don't have to hang out with those guys, you know.

HAN. I'm the guest of honor. I don't got a choice.

(He holds up an MCAT study book.)

"MCAT Success."

RA. Yet another thing I'm neglecting.

HAN. It's good that you're following through with that though. It's a hard road.

RA. I guess.

HAN. I always knew you'd be up in that. You was always that type.

RA. What type is that?

HAN. Wholesome.

RA. *(laughs)* Not always.

HAN. *(smiles)* Mostly wholesome.

(short pause)

RA. So you got a job yet?

HAN. Yeah. I'm doin what every Khmer's *(pronunciation of "Khmer": KA-MAI.)* out there doin:

RA & HAN. *(together)* Makin donuts.

HAN. Yeah. Just got hired at Misty's on Atlantic.

RA. Funny how every donut shop in Long Beach is owned by Cambodians.

HAN. Well, it all started with that one guy, right? He opens a donut shop, blows up, franchises it, gets rich... Soon everybody's makin donuts.

Good thing he didn't get rich cleanin septic tanks.

RA. So are you all right working there?

HAN. I'm used to gettin up early so it'll be no problem. Come in between six and twelve. I'll hook you up with a dozen.

RA. Thanks.

(short pause)

HAN. Passed by your Ma's store. Feel bad seein it closed up.

RA. Landlord's been hassling me for the rent for next month even though he already leased it to someone else. And I still gotta sell off the rest of the inventory in there. Half a rack of chewing gum and three month old porno mags –

HAN. Guys like to jerk it to whatever's fresh.

RA. Cute.

HAN. Tell me what you got and I'll help you find buyers.

RA. Well, everything perishable has perished. Cigarettes are all sold, so it's mostly candy, mags and potato chips. And if you know anyone that's interested in a used tortilla maker, let me know.

HAN. Okay.

(beat)

Your Ma always made the best burritos.

(RA laughs.)

You know that, right? Even better than the Mexicans.

RA. High praise.

HAN. No shit. Mexicans cook everything in this city – you go into a restaurant and you'll find them makin sushi n' shit. But your Ma made the best tortas in LB. Mexicans lined up around the block for food from her store.

RA. The secret was lard.

HAN. I call that "home-style cookin."

(beat)

Four o'clock every day I'd help her lug stuff in from the back. Thass how I grew these:

(He flexes a bicep.)

Just from liftin milk.

(She flexes a bicep as well –)

RA. Well, I got em too.

HAN. *(amused)* Yeah...

After your pa passed away, she ran that place by herself. Five AM to ten at night, right?

RA. Well, the tortilla maker's there if you know anybody that wants it.

HAN. I'll put an ear out.

(She closes up a box, tapes it shut.)

You need anything? More boxes?

RA. I could use more time. So if you've got control over the time/space continuum, pull a lever or something. Otherwise –

(He takes out a thick envelope, puts it on the table.)

What's that supposed to be?

HAN. It's from the tooth fairy.

RA. Uh-huh.

HAN. To cover incidentals.

RA. Your bonus for making a record number of donuts?

HAN. Sure. Take it.

RA. I don't need it.

HAN. It's to pay your ma back.

RA. For what.

HAN. When I was little and there was nothing in our kitchen except taco shells and chocolate syrup, she'd feed me. She didn't have the money to, but she did. Can't count how many dinners she fed me. Gotta pay her back –

RA. It's all right –

HAN. And I wasn't there – at the temple, for her funeral. And I shoulda been –

RA. Keep your money.

HAN. I owe your ma.

(He pushes the money toward her.)

And so you don't have to worry.

(She takes the money, holds it out to him –)

RA. I don't want it.

(She tosses it onto the table in front of him.)

I'm doing all right. Doing fine.

(A pause. He watches her work.)

(VUTHY enters through the front door. There's blood on his shirt. He has the makings of a bad black eye.)

VUTHY. *(re: HAN)* It's him: The world's largest Cambodian!

HAN. Vuthy!

(HAN hugs him.)

I ain't even that big.

VUTHY. Well, we are, by nature, a smallish people.

(HAN weighs VUTHY's head in his hands.)

HAN. Your head's still the heaviest part of your body.

VUTHY. You still need help gettin your mattress?

HAN. Nah, we got it –

(beat)

What happened to your eye?

VUTHY. Samoans.

RA. What do you mean "Samoans"?

VUTHY. I saved up my lunch money to get some cheeseburgers at Mac Donalds after school. And I was waitin for the bus when these Samoans – linebacker, hill-sized muthafuckahs – came up on me and was like, "Whatchoo got in that MAG-Donalds bag?" "Nothin," I said. And then they said "Gimme your bag fulla nothin!" and then they popped me. Gots beat up over a cheeseburger.

(She dabs at his face with a dish rag.)

RA. Why didn't you just give them the food?

VUTHY. I know these Samoans. They was gonna pop me anyways. Thought I could make it through with the cheeseburgers intact.

HAN. You should've hit them.

RA. NO, he shouldn't have.

VUTHY. These Samoans hit real hard – they got a lotta upper body strength. Must be from all the paddlin.

RA. They go to your school?

VUTHY. Yeah.

RA. Okay, now we're really gonna go to the Principal.

HAN. Thass not gonna do anything –

RA. Will you please shut up?

(She examines VUTHY's face, dabs at it with a paper towel –)

There's a cut here – you're bleeding over your eye –

VUTHY. It doan hurt anymore. OW!

RA. You're lucky you don't need stitches –

VUTHY. You know, I betchu that there's no Samoans in Berkeley.

RA. No, I'm pretty sure that there are.

VUTHY. Yeah but I bet they ain't the kind that steals peoples' Mac Donalds –

(VUTHY spots HAN's cigarettes –)

VUTHY. Teach me how to smoke!

HAN. Okay.

RA. NO.

(She grabs VUTHY by the arm, drags him to the bathroom –)

We've got to wash this out, put a band-aid over it –

VUTHY. *(to HAN:)* You gonna stay for a while, right? I got the new X-Men I wanna show you.

(HAN stands, picks up his things.)

HAN. Got some things I gotta do. Knock on our door later tonight.

VUTHY. A'ight. Bye –

(RA drags VUTHY into the bathroom to clean him up – we can hear them squabbling from off.)

(HAN puts out his cigarette, dumps out the ashtray.)

(And he hides the envelope of money in one of RA's moving boxes.)

Scene Four

(HAN's car.)

(HAN drives. VUTHY watches the world float by the passenger's window.)

(On the radio:)

GEORGE W. BUSH. Admiral Kelly, Captain Card, officers and sailors of the USS Abraham Lincoln, my fellow Americans: Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed –

HAN. Fuck that motherfucker. Fuckin Saddam Hussein. Motherfucka gasses his own people. I hope they find him and ghost his ass.

VUTHY. Me too.

HAN. Four years ago, when my pa still had his store, George W. Bush stopped by while he was campaigning. Didja know that, Vuthy?

VUTHY. Naw, really?

HAN. Yeah. Bought a Twix and shook my hand. When nobody wanted us, Ronald Reagan let us into this country.

VUTHY. I know.

HAN. Never forget that, Vuthy.

VUTHY. I won't.

Thanks for takin me to school.

HAN. Yeah, don't worry about it. You get good grades?

VUTHY. "A"s except for P.E.

HAN. Juss do what the teacher tells you and he won't be able to give you nothing less than an A.

(short pause)

So Ra said you went back to tha motherland over the summer.

VUTHY. Yeah. The temple sponsored a group trip back to Cambodia.

HAN. How'd you like it?

VUTHY. It's hot, man – hot and moist. And the people over there is *dark*. Mahogany brown.

HAN. Well, you and your sister got a lotta Chinese in you.

VUTHY. They got these Happy Pizzas –

HAN. Oh yeah. I heard about those.

VUTHY. Yeah, with the weed baked in the cheese.

HAN. (*laughs*) *Chronic pizzas*. You eat one?

VUTHY. No, but Peter Meang did. He thought monkeys were gonna jump outta the trees and steal his eye-brows.

HAN. Where else you go?

VUTHY. Angkor Wat. With the trees growing out of the stones...makes you feel small. To know that so many people lived before you did.

HAN. We are the sons of Kings. Don't forget that, Vuthy.

VUTHY. I won't.

HAN. You go to Tuol Sleng, Choeung Ek, (*Pron: Tull Slang, Chung Ech*) any of those places?

VUTHY. The Killing Fields –

HAN. Yeah –

VUTHY. Yeah, in Cheoung Ek they had this temple in the middle of the field. And inside they had these racks of skulls from all the people the Khmer Rouge killed, hundreds of em, right out there in front of you – so close you could touch 'em.

HAN. Yeah?

VUTHY. You could grab one, throw it in your backpack if you really wanted to.

(*beat*)

You think you'll ever go back there again?

HAN. Naw. Don't need to see that. Glad you got to though. Every Khmer man needs to know where he comes from.

VUTHY. I didn't wanna go at first. But Ma really wanted me to. I feel good that I did.

(short pause)

HAN. So these Samoans: They pick on you a lot?

VUTHY. Sometimes. I doan know.

HAN. You gotta stick with your own kind, Vuthy: Khmer people.

VUTHY. Yeah, but it seems that the Khmer kids are the most interested in beatin me up.

HAN. What?

Why is that?

VUTHY. I dunno. Doan matter anyway. Somebody's gotta get beat up.

HAN. Yeah, but why's that gotta be you?

VUTHY. While it's happening I tell myself that it builds character.

HAN. Naw, Vuthy – that ain't right.

Next time one of these motherfuckers comes up on you, do me a favor: Fuckin hit em. Hit em as hard as you can with whatever you got, you feel me?

VUTHY. *(unsure about this)* Yeah –

HAN. Listen: You know why the yin-yang has a dot of black in the middle of the white circle and a dot of white in the middle of the black circle?

VUTHY. Why?

HAN. 'Cause inside everything is a tiny core of its opposite. Inside the strongest, baddest motherfucka in the world is a core of weakness. So if someone big and bad fucks with you, don't even think about it: Hit em as hard as you can. Fucks 'em up. Shakes 'em to the core.

VUTHY. Okay, Han.

HAN. Okay.

Your ma know you got beat up so much?

VUTHY. Naw. Didn't wanna worry her.

HAN. Okay. Thass good.

VUTHY. Maybe...I should join TRG. Like you. You high up in there – maybe you could put in a good word for me –

HAN. Thass not for you. TRG is for guys that don't got families. TRG is their family. But you – you just gotta man up a little.

VUTHY. The thing is, I'm not exactly sure how to do that.

HAN. Well, that may be something we can do somethin about.

(beat)

So what's up with your sis?... That punk she shackin with in Nor Cal –

VUTHY. “Glenn.”

HAN. Yeah. How long they been together?

VUTHY. I doan know. Two years now?... I fuckin hate that guy. Last time I seen him he's like, “Hey Vuthy why don't you try playin' tennis?...” Tennis? Do I look like I'm in a country club? Fuckin thirsty-ass, Orange County motherfucker.

(HAN laughs.)

HAN. So what you gonna do when Ra goes back up there?

VUTHY. Stay here with Aunt Tizz.

HAN. You really wanna do that?

VUTHY. I doan know.

HAN. She nice, but it smells like moth balls and cat piss over there.

VUTHY. I know.

HAN. Well maybe we can figure something else out.

VUTHY. Really?

HAN. Yeah.

(He pulls the car over.)

Okay. I'll pick you up at three fifteen, on this spot.

VUTHY. Okay. Hey –

HAN. What.

VUTHY. Thanks for comin back.

Scene Five

(The apartment. That afternoon.)

(VUTHY is sitting at the kitchen table. Dungeons and Dragons character sheets, reference books, and various types of dice are spread out on the table.)

(He's playing Dungeons and Dragons on the phone:)

VUTHY. So you're at a fork in the passageway. Do you wanna go left or right?... Okay, you point Hrogg's Decapitated Head left. Its eyes glow red, lighting the dark passage ahead. Yeah. Okay, you go left... You enter a huge cavern, and then you see it: An ORC encampment – tents, warthogs roastin on spits, Orcish weapons in stacks – and all around are dozens of Orcs kickin it doin Orc things. Crackin jokes, tellin Orc stories. This they crib.

(laughs)

Yeah, they drinkin Orc ale from Orc forties. You're fuckin funny, Bert!

(beat)

Okay – you try to sneak up to them –

(VUTHY rolls a D20.)

But they see you. SHIT! They mobbin you – mad doggin you. And they see you got Hrogg's Decapitated Head and they pissed! They fuckin pissed! ...And the strongest, baddest one of them comes up on you and is like, "Yo, you got Hrogg's fuckin head – you kilt him! You fuckin kilt my homie?!" So what do you do –

(There's a knock at the screen door.)

(into the phone:)

Hold on.

(GLENN, mid-20s, Chinese American, peeks his head in. He is good looking, clean cut, preppy.)

GLENN. Anybody home?

(VUTHY focuses his stare on GLENN as he enters.)

Hey Vuthy. How's it going?

VUTHY. I'm DM'ing right now.

GLENN. Oh yeah, neat. Is Ra here?

VUTHY. She's out.

GLENN. Oh. Well, I came down to surprise her.

VUTHY. Well, the effect of that's kinda lost 'cause she's out.

GLENN. Okay. So – is it okay if I wait here?

(VUTHY stares at him.)

Hey – when I was exiting the freeway I noticed that there's a mall. Do you know if there's a Banana Republic there? I gotta return some stuff –

VUTHY. Do I look like I know the answer to that question, Glenn?

GLENN. Okay. Well, I'm going to the mall then.

You wanna come with?

(VUTHY doesn't respond.)

Okay. Can I leave my stuff here?

(Still no response.)

Well, tell your sister I'm here, and... "Surprise."

VUTHY. Yay.

(GLENN exits out the front door.)

Thirsty-ass mother...

(back on the phone:)

Sorry, dude. Okay, so what do you do?... A'ight, you draw your sword – and the motherfucka's like, "Whoa, whoa..."

Scene Six

(The apartment. Later that afternoon.)

(HAN is cooking on the stove. RA leans against the counter, watching him.)

HAN. Thanks for this. Chelly don't have time to fix my pa's stove till Monday.

RA. Sure, it's no problem. What is that?

HAN. Ox tails. Just need to warm 'em.

RA. Smells good.

HAN. A little garlic powder. Kicks it up.

RA. Thanks for picking Vuthy up from school.

HAN. You're welcome.

So he say that after you're gone he gonna stay with Aunt Tizz.

RA. That's right.

HAN. Okay, 'cause you know he can stay with me and my pa –

RA. No way.

HAN. Why no way.

RA. You know why.

HAN. Hah.

RA. You know that if you get in trouble again, they can deport you. Right?

HAN. Uh-huh.

RA. "Cambodia wants its sons back."

HAN. Well. Makin donuts in Cambodia don't sound so bad.

RA. It's not funny. It happens. Bobby Moeuk: They got him on breaking and entering, sent him to jail. Selling stolen parts offa Civics, sent him to jail. Then they take him in for unpaid parking tickets: Boom – deported back to Cambodia. For unpaid parking tickets.

HAN. I'm careful.

RA. Says the guy who just got outta prison.

HAN. I'm careful *now*.

RA. I'm not some dumb teenage girl anymore. I know what you are. In high school, those TRG girls with the crispy hair and talon-like nails – they all knew your name.

(HAN laughs, stirs the ox tails.)

I know who your friends are. Where you get your money. That boy of yours – Donny: Donny Neak –

HAN. Uh-huh –

RA. With the Acura Integra he paid for in hundred dollar bills –

HAN. We knew a guy at the dealership that cut him a deal for cash.

RA. Right. Your partner in crime: Donny Neak. Stabbed that kid in the chest three times –

HAN. The kid wasn't hurt – the knife kept bouncin off his rib cage –

RA. Sure.

So once he gets out of prison, you two gonna be Bonnie and Clyde again?

HAN. *(a beat, thinking:)* Don't worry about Donny. I can handle Donny.

(short pause)

RA. Taking Vuthy to school, picking him up: That's okay. But if you really wanna help him out, leave it at that.

HAN. So why you not takin him with you?

RA. This is only temporary. I'm giving Aunt Tizz a few hundred bucks a month to help out –

HAN. A'ight...

RA. So thank you for offering, but I made arrangements already.

HAN. And anyway, you got the MCATs now. And that dude, Glenn –

RA. Yes, Glenn. So if you're on my case about him, too –

HAN. No. That's cool that you got somebody.

RA. Fine.

(RA unfolds a cardboard box, tapes its bottom solid.)

RA. *(cont.)* I've gotta get back to school – and I'm sorry, I wish I could take him, but we don't have the room and I don't have the time.

HAN. Okay. You don't haveta explain it to me.

RA. Good, because I'm not going to anymore.

And I've only got a few days left to pack up the rest of this room, and as you can see, I've got a lot of work to do –

(Re: Ma's objects)

I don't know what the hell I'm gonna do with these things.

HAN. Your Ma sure loved them.

RA. I don't even know where she got them. Every week or so she'd come home with a new one, add it to the shelf. I told her not to waste money on them. "Stop bringing those home," I told her. We're gonna drown in them.

HAN. She said she liked lookin at them. It made her happy to see all of them together. Like little people in little rows lookin back at her.

RA. She told you that?

HAN. Yeah.

RA. I never heard her say that.

HAN. She told that to me every now and then.

(He scans the shelves of objects, finds a particular one that is seemingly indistinguishable from the others:)

Hah – here it is.

This is it.

RA. What.

(He grabs it, shows it to her.)

HAN. This is the first one.

RA. What do you mean?

HAN. This is the one she brought with her when she came here. The one from Cambodia.

RA. What?