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Love Person

by Aditi Brennan Kapil

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**

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Love Person was developed and received its world premiere at Mixed Blood Theatre (MN) as part of the National New Play Network's Continued Life for New Plays Program, with subsequent productions at Marin Theatre (CA) and Phoenix Theatre (IN). It received its first reading in May, 2005, at the Playwrights' Center (MN), and was further workshopped in Lark Play Development Center's Playwrights' Week 2006 (NY).

and

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LOVE PERSON was developed and received its world premiere at Mixed Blood Theatre, Minnesota (Jack Reuler, artistic director) as part of the National New Play Network’s Continued Life for New Plays Program on February 29, 2008. The performance was directed by Risa Brainin, assistant director was Sara Rademacher, with sets by Nayna Ramey, costumes by Christine Richardson, lighting by Michael Klaers, sound by C. Andrew Mayer, props by Gwen Heyn, and projections design by Nayna Ramey and Michael Klaers. The ASL Signmaster was Raymond Luczak, the ASL Interpreter was Rachel Arth, the production manager was Rainbow S. Plant, the stage manager was Julia Gallagher and the dramaturg was Liz Engelman. The cast was as follows:

VIC Jennifer Maren
FREE Alexandria Wailes
MAGGIE Erin McGovern
RAM Rajesh Bose

CHARACTERS

VIC – 30s, two divorces, drinks too much. Free’s sister. Some basic ASL skills. – Brash

FREE – 30s-40s, Deaf, Maggie’s lover, Vic’s older sister. Uses ASL exclusively, does not voice. – Restless

MAGGIE – 30s-40s, English Lit professor, Free’s lover. Fluent ASL, interpreting for Free is second nature. When they’re alone together they sign only. – Content

RAM (pronounced “Raahm”) – Sanskrit Professor from East Coast, Second generation, fully westernized. Here on a short visit, quiet and intelligent. – Lonely

SET

On the back wall is a large screen where all email communications and telephone calls are displayed, also the dialogue of scenes that are ASL only, as specified.

If your production opts for ASL access, as opposed to screen access, for the scenes between Vic and Ram...

A streetlight where Maggie interprets the scenes between Vic and Ram into ASL, and where Free performs the ASL poems in Parts 2 and 3. The streetlight provides a heightened reality where Free and Maggie connect with their memories of the past, and their present day fascinations with Ram and Vic, while at the same time providing bilingual access.

SOUND

The qualities of sound and silence are important elements in this play.

Vic’s world (i.e. the club) is noisy, drunk, and full of people. By contrast Free’s world (her home with Maggie) is silent. Ram’s home is quiet, though not necessarily silent. How noisy or quiet the characters are supports the connections they make, Free and Ram have quiet in common, Maggie and Vic both have a need for some noise.

The poems opening parts 2 and 3 relate to Free and Ram, and should be just the Sanskrit and ASL in conversation with each other with no extraneous sound. At its most basic level, this play is a love story between ASL and Sanskrit.

The poems opening parts 1 and 4 relate to Ram and Vic, so sound may leak in from Vic’s world; e.g., club music in part 1.

More traditional sound design does have a place in, for instance, transitions, and Ram and Free’s email correspondences. Piano music (like typing, like snow) may be suitable.

READING THE SCRIPT

Roman	Spoken English
[Roman]	ASL
[<u>Roman</u>]	Spoken English and ASL
<i>(Italic)</i>	Stage Directions
<i>(On screen: projections)</i>	On screen communication
PRIMARY SPEAKER/VOICER OR INTERPRETER	for instance marks when Maggie interprets

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Deaf performer Nicole Zapko for her inspiring work as an artist, and for her advice and input throughout the writing of this play,

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Liz Engelman for the dramaturgy and friendship,

Sandy Shinner, and Victory Gardens Theatre, for assistance acquiring the cover art and sanskrit transcriptions.

Sean Brennan, my love person.

PART I

Scene One

(RAM's voice in dark reciting verse from Srngaratilaka, verse appears on screen in Sanskrit script.)

(During the V.O., lights fade up on VIC and RAM in Vic's apartment, dimly lit, throbbing music. VIC laughs and moves to the music, eyes closed, glass of red wine in hand. RAM watches her, fascinated, aroused. Lights fade out.)

RAM. *(V.O.)*

Aviditasukhaduhkham nirgunam vastu kincit
Jadamatir iha kascin moksa ityacacakse
Mama tu matam anangasmerata runyaghurnan –
Madakalamadir aksi – nivimokso hi moksah

(Lights up on RAM speaking at a nightclub, similar throbbing music turned down low. No one really showed up, it's awkward, but he finishes a snippet of the poem and then reads the translation. VIC, FREE and MAGGIE watch from a table, MAGGIE tries to interpret the poem into ASL for FREE. ASL is not on screen.)

RAM.

...Madakalamadiraksi –
nuvimokso hi moksah
OK, so in English...
Some in this world insist
That a certain whatever
– it – is

MAGGIE.

[wait...Sanskrit... Sanskrit...]
[OK, now English –]
[People think]
[something... what-ever...]

That has no taste of	[no joy no sad]
Joy or sorrow	[lost people]
No qualities	FREE.
Is Release	[Which people?]
They are fools	MAGGIE.
	[The people who think they're 'lost']
To my mind her	FREE.
Body unfurling	[What does that mean, 'lost'?]
With joy of being young	MAGGIE.
Flowering out of love	[It's poetry, wait, let me understand it]
Her eyes floating as	VIC.
with wine and	
Words wandering with	[Pay attention!]
love	
Then the undoing of the	
knot	
Of her sari	
That	MAGGIE.
Is Release	[Ok, ok –]
	[When young lovers, their clothes off]
	[drunk, chatting, that is letting go –]
	[Shit! Sorry. Did you get anything from that?]
	FREE.
	(<i>laughing</i>) [That sucked!]

(**RAM** finishes, **VIC** claps enthusiastically. Out of sight there is hooting and hollering from busboys and waitresses – “Yeah, Ram!” “Not bad man!” “Wooo...” embarrassed, **RAM** exits toward the ruckus, muttering ‘Shut up.’)

(Thumping club music amps up almost immediately, remains throughout the scene. Meanwhile...)

(ASL is not on screen.)

MAGGIE.

[I know, I'm sorry! I
know I can do better,
hold on,]
[let me try to summa-
rize...]

VIC.

Whadya think, huh?
That was [good], right?

FREE.

[I have no clue]

VIC.

[What? No!]

MAGGIE.

[My fault! That was
terrible, interpreter mal-
function big time]

FREE.

[That's ok, i don't think
it's my style]

VIC.

Shit man, I really wanted
you to hear it!

MAGGIE.

[Well it might have been your style if I hadn't
screwed it up]

VIC.

Know what? I'll [go get him], he can do it [again],
[you're gonna love it.] I swear, he's a total sweet-
heart! Maggie will rock it this time!

(VIC exits.)

Hey Ram! Woووو, that rocked!

(beat)

(ASL on screen)

FREE. [She's sleeping with him]

MAGGIE. [So?]

FREE. ["Oh hey, let's do something different, there's
a poetry reading at the club, come on, it'll be fun
-"]

MAGGIE. [Well, that was mostly true]

FREE. [Maybe she'll marry him – lucky #3.]

[How much do you want to bet she forgets about us and doesn't come back?]

MAGGIE. [She's coming back. Stop being such a big sister, you're too judgmental – try to have some fun]

(VIC and RAM enter; RAM is still holding the poem. He is courteous, but would like to leave.)

(ASL not on screen)

VIC. OK, so [Ram], this is my [sister] Free, also Jones, and her [partner] Maggie Etulain

RAM./MAGGIE. [Hello, hello, pleased to meet you, I feel like an idiot]

VIC. Nooo!

MAGGIE. That was a lovely reading, thank you!

RAM./MAGGIE. No, thank you, for showing up –
[– though the busboys found me fascinating, I'm sure!]

MAGGIE. [Oh, actually, is that the poem? May I see it?]

RAM. Sure, did I butcher it that badly?

(RAM hands the poem to MAGGIE.)

MAGGIE. No, no, I did...

(FREE snatches the poem.)

FREE.

(to MAGGIE) [I'll just read it]

MAGGIE.

[You sure?]

MAGGIE. [...I butchered it, and I was feeling badly about it, so –]

(silent beat as they watch FREE read)

VIC. OK, so you want a [drink]? On me!

RAM./MAGGIE. [No, thanks, I... I'll pass.]

[I get dehydrated on airplanes]

VIC. Aw, poor baby

RAM./MAGGIE. [I should probably go get my bags. You can hang on to that if you'd like –]

VIC. Hey, no, no, you've got time, siddown!

RAM./MAGGIE. [Well, just a little bit, I like to be early – but I guess my ride's not here yet –]

VIC. That's right, [so kick back], [enjoy] the last few minutes of your vacation!

(*Beat. MAGGIE tries to make conversation.*)

MAGGIE. [Did you translate this poem? From the original?]

RAM./MAGGIE. [No, not at all, I don't do that sort of thing. This guy, Merwin, he's planning a book and the head of our department is collaborating, he wrote this one –]

[It's the best translation I've come across, which is not saying much.]

[Then again, it all sounds wrong to me once it leaves Sanskrit, so I'm a poor judge –]

(*FREE is done with the poem, hands the paper back.*)

RAM./MAGGIE. [What do you think?]

FREE./MAGGIE. [Hard to say]

RAM. Ah

MAGGIE. It's hard to translate English to ASL, especially poetry.

VIC. [Maggie teaches] poetry too!

RAM.

FREE.

Oh?

[Can we leave?]

MAGGIE.

[Yes. Yes.][Which is why I was particularly embarrassed][To do such a poor job of interpreting it. Um.][So, tell me more about this poem.][It was great!]

VIC.

[No! Stay!]

RAM./MAGGIE. [Oh, it's ancient. Most of my work is. I didn't know what to read – then I thought maybe a thematic sort of tie – in, wine, bar, intoxication and, I don't know –]

[Anyway, thanks. It was alright.]

VIC. You [kicked ass], I shit you not! And Maggie is like my [smartest friend], she knows poetry, and she loved it! – so come on, relaaaax...

(VIC kisses RAM, it's awkward.)

VIC. Don't be shy! Are you shy? [He's shy]!

RAM.

[No, I'm not shy]

FREE./MAGGIE.

[How did you two meet?]

VIC. I just [picked him up] after my shift last Thursday

RAM./MAGGIE. [I'm visiting my cousin Birju, the asshole who talked me into doing this reading and then didn't have the good grace to stick around to laugh at me.] FREE.

He better still be planning to take me to the airport, where is he? [He doesn't like that poem?]

FREE./MAGGIE. [(Um, Free is asking)] – You don't like it?

RAM. What?

MAGGIE. Your poem.

RAM./MAGGIE. [No, I do! I'm sorry, I didn't mean to sound... It's one of my favorites actually.]

[Just, in English, what's the difference really? It's some foreign thing that you're hearing, a novelty...though I'm delighted of course if you liked it... ah...]

[I'm sorry, is there a protocol? Stupid question – should I speak slower so you can – ?]

MAGGIE. [No, I'm fine. You can speak at your normal pace. You don't like translations?]

RAM./MAGGIE. [Hate them!]

VIC. Hey!

RAM./MAGGIE. [Hate them hate them hate them, they make me feel stupid]

VIC. Well, I love this poem! I'm [keeping] it!

MAGGIE. [I thought it was lovely –]

VIC.

[This is our poem!] (FREE gives MAGGIE a look.)

I'm [gonna frame it]!

And, plus, handy letter-head – so I can

MAGGIE.

[call you]! Or, hey, [email you.]

[What?]

Or, better still – fax!

FREE.

[How do you know it's beautiful?]

(They look at FREE & MAGGIE)

MAGGIE.

Guys?

[I'm just saying I think it is]

FREE.

[But you don't know]

MAGGIE. [Sorry! This is an ongoing debate for us. Practical concerns of daily life aside, Free would rather not bother with English. Which I find unrealistic –]

(**FREE** *interrupts.*)

FREE. [Ask what his poem really says]

MAGGIE. Free is asking – [What does your poem really say?]

RAM./MAGGIE. [How do you mean?]

FREE./MAGGIE. [Just the words, what are all the words?]

(*beat*)

RAM./MAGGIE. [Oh great, now I'm going to if possible sound even more idiotic.]

[Ok, it's something like –]

(*He gets a little comical with it.*)

[Foolish man – joy or pain in material things – worthless! Salvation!]

[My opinion – uncovering... art of love intoxication – loosening the waistband – salvation!]

[You see, it's nonsense.]

[I have to tell you though, that I find everything clearer in Sanskrit. It's more precise, simpler.]

[What is true release, true love – it's hard to explain in any language, right? But I think Sanskrit succeeds... or comes closer anyway...]

[Do you know it's at the root of most Indo – European languages? You're all speaking Sanskrit right now, just in an incredibly impure form.]

VIC. Yeah?

RAM./MAGGIE. [Yes... say something –]

VIC. Say...? Like what?

RAM. Anything. Really.

VIC. Um. Hi, [my name is Vic], I'm a Sagittarius?

RAM./MAGGIE. Sanskrit for name is naama.

VIC. No shit!

RAM. Absolutely none.

VIC. That is so cool! (*to MAGGIE*) Ok, that was mine, now you go!

RAM./MAGGIE. [Go is GAM!]

VIC. Sweet! Who the hell knows shit like that?

RAM./MAGGIE. [Thank you, that's my only party trick. I'm finished.]

(VIC *laughs a lot.*)

FREE.

[Calm down –]

RAM./MAGGIE.

[Anyway, to me English muddies things, over-complicates them.]

VIC.

[What?]

[Particularly Sanskrit love poetry, which needs to have a more visceral impact.]

FREE.

[You're like a hyperactive puppy]

[I think.]

VIC.

[Fuck you]

FREE. (*interrupting MAGGIE*) [I want to ask him a question. You said we are all speaking Sanskrit?]

MAGGIE. [(Free is asking)] You said we're all speaking Sanskrit?

RAM./MAGGIE. [Yes! It's just the roots of certain words.] that's where you can track it...

FREE./MAGGIE. [I'm (Free's) not speaking Sanskrit]

RAM./MAGGIE. [No, of course not, but your signing has its basis in English –]

FREE./MAGGIE. [No]

(MAGGIE *tries to cover the awkwardness.*)

MAGGIE. [...but I suppose if you're not really using ASL, if you're signing more English, that could be related... distantly...]

(FREE catches her attention.)

FREE. [I'm still talking]

FREE./MAGGIE. [(Sorry) You're talking about the sounds of words, right?]

RAM./MAGGIE. [Yes]

FREE./MAGGIE. [Then ASL has no Sanskrit root. In fact, you could say that gestures, which are the actual root of ASL, came before Sanskrit.]

[Am I right?]

(beat)

RAM./MAGGIE. [Sure. That's very interesting. What an interesting thought.]

FREE./MAGGIE. [I think English is a very confusing language. I feel bad for hearing people.]

[Like you two, for instance, how would you describe your relationship? Dating, flirting, interested, long distance relationship? Don't know?]

[So many words, very little meaning.]

VIC. OK, Free, [have some beer why don't you]

FREE.

RAM./MAGGIE.

[What? I'm just curious.]

[OK... so what do you two call yourselves?]

FREE./MAGGIE. [Lovers]

RAM. Lovers?

MAGGIE. [Lovers]

(beat)

RAM./MAGGIE. [But lovers can apply to... lovers seems vague...so how do you make the distinction between lets say less committed and more committed couples...?]

FREE./MAGGIE. [We don't need to. We're lovers]

RAM./MAGGIE. [Life-long lovers?]

(FREE *laughs.*)

[What's funny?]

FREE./MAGGIE. [Hearing people]

(beat)

RAM. [What is that sign you used? Lovers –]

MAGGIE. (MAGGIE *demonstrates.*) [Lovers]

RAM. So this is [love] and then...

MAGGIE. [It breaks down to love-person]

RAM. Love person?

MAGGIE. Sure, same with any other sort of person,
Teacher, Dancer... verb plus person.

RAM./MAGGIE. [That's a bit clinical]

MAGGIE. [Accurate. You are what you do.]

RAM./MAGGIE. Sure. Right.

(beat)

[I'm sorry, I should track down my cousin, my
flight leaves in a couple of hours]

VIC. Already?

RAM./MAGGIE. [It's been great Vic, really]

(RAM *gives her a quick hug.*)

VIC./MAGGIE. [Definitely! Yeah, stay in touch, ok?]

RAM./MAGGIE. [Yes! Nice meeting you both!]

FREE. [Bye]

MAGGIE. [You too, a pleasure! (to FREE) [Behave!]

FREE. [What?]

(RAM *exits.*)

VIC. Look at him go, oh oh, [watch watch watch]...
he's going to check all his pockets right when he
hits the door, side side chest back pockets, aaand
– pat pat pat pat pat, mmmm – mmm – every fuck-
ing time!

FREE. [OK, Mom.]

VIC. [Ok, Mom]? [What]'s that supposed to mean?
And what the hell is [your problem]? [You] just
feel like being a [bitch]? This is why we don't hang
out, [you] fucking go out of your way to [embar-
rass me]!

Fuck this – Hey Ram, wait up! I'll ride with you ok?

(**VIC** exits.)

You're getting the big sendoff, baby!

(*Sound of kazoos, laughter, bar crowd gathers to see
RAM off.*)

(**FREE** signs after **VIC**.)

(*ASL on screen*)

FREE. [Hey this was really great! Next time, don't call!
I'd rather sit at home picking my nose!]

(**MAGGIE** taps her.)

[What?]

MAGGIE. [I'm not voicing that]

FREE. [Why the hell not?]

MAGGIE. [I'm not yelling at your sister in the middle
of a bar]

FREE. [No?]

MAGGIE. [No]

FREE. [Wussy]

MAGGIE. [Bite me]

FREE. [Let's go home]

(*Lights fade as MAGGIE and FREE get up to leave
bar. Kazoos, laughter, noise fade.*)

Scene Two

(Lights up on FREE and MAGGIE's apartment, they're just getting home, getting ready for bed, in mid-debate. Their home is quiet.)

(This scene is in ASL only, English appears on screen.)

MAGGIE. [I wasn't speaking for you, I was talking about ASL]

FREE. [Well, next time let me talk about ASL]

MAGGIE. [I was just...ok fine]

FREE. [It's no big deal, I'm just mentioning it]

MAGGIE. [Ok, whatever, we'll never see him again, it doesn't matter]

[I didn't realize he was leaving town right away, I feel bad, we should have left so they could be alone to say goodbye...]

FREE. [He was not interested in being alone with my sister]

MAGGIE. [How do you know?]

FREE. [I know.]

[That poem he read is pointless]

MAGGIE.*(laughs)* [Yeah well, you think all poetry is pointless]

FREE. [You said it's trying to describe love, right?]

MAGGIE. [Right...]

FREE. [There's already a perfectly good description of love. Sex.]

(FREE pulls MAGGIE close, they, kiss. FREE starts laughing.)

FREE. [I think it's interesting that a hearing professor hates translations too]

MAGGIE. [He doesn't hate translations]

FREE. [He said, 'I hate translations'.]

MAGGIE. [He didn't mean it literally. He translates all day]

FREE. [Doesn't mean he likes it]

MAGGIE. [No, he lives in a state of misery, every time he opens his mouth]

FREE. [OK, you have no sense of humor about this]

MAGGIE. [You're not making a joke, you're picking a fight.]

FREE. [What fight? We live in an English world, we'll keep living in an English world, no one's threatening your language. Why can't you just admit that translation is not as good, and stop being so defensive –]

MAGGIE. [You're not saying translation is not as good, you're saying translation sucks]

FREE. [Same thing]

MAGGIE. [It is not the same thing, and no one is saying that translation is just as good, just that maybe it has its own value, and it's better than nothing]

FREE. (*not on screen*) [Blablabla]

MAGGIE. [What?]

FREE. [I've seen this speech before. "This has this kind of value, this has that kind of value," – nothing is absolutely like anything else, but that's ok, let's mix it all up and see what comes out.]

MAGGIE. [Whatever. Vic's right, you're in a mood.]

FREE. [Vic is the same as our mother.]

MAGGIE. [You don't give her a chance]

FREE. [I know exactly what happens – she falls in love every week, with someone impossible, she's fun, she's a party girl, she'll cry when he doesn't call, make a big tragedy out of it, she's known him one week and he's the love of her life, whatever, I'm

bored. Trust me, she's my sister, I know her a lot better than you. Can we finish with this subject?]

MAGGIE. [You brought it up.]

FREE. [OK, well I'm done with it.]

MAGGIE. [Well I thought it was an interesting evening]

FREE. [Good for you]

MAGGIE. [It was fun to do something different, maybe if you were willing to try –]

(FREE turns lights out, conversation is cut off.)

(Silence. MAGGIE's last words linger on screen.

MAGGIE turns light back on.)

FREE. [What?]

MAGGIE. [I was talking]

FREE. [Sorry. I didn't see. What were you saying?]

(beat)

MAGGIE. [You're tired]

FREE. [That's what you were saying?]

MAGGIE. [No, that's what I'm saying now. Let's go to bed.]

FREE. [Fine.]

(FREE exits. MAGGIE turns out light as she exits.)

Scene Three

(Night. RAM is at his computer. He is back to his normal self, a private, lonely.)

RAM. *(He proofs an Email out loud as it appears on screen.)*

TO: Birju@clubcacophony.com

FROM: Balaram

RE: Visit

Dear cousin,

Thanks for hosting my vacation, I had a great time. I'm back to work now, and as dull as I ever was. Your lifestyle is not for me in the long term, though I appreciate your efforts on my behalf.

My regards to all the staff and tell Vic thanks for a memorable week...

(RAM makes a face, deletes back to 'and'.)

...and Vic. And stop telling my mother stories, or I'll tell your mother about your parties!

Cheers,

Ram

(He sends, thinks a moment, starts a new email out loud)

TO: MeenaJoshi@freenet.uk

FROM: Balaram

RE: Visit

Dear Mum, I'm back at work after an exhausting week of relaxing in Birju's company. Tell Auntie my lips are sealed, she will hear none of his secrets from me.

As for Birju's loose lips, no I did NOT meet anyone 'special' while I was there.

(RAM murmurs 'asshole'.)

Professor Masson is beginning research for a new book of Sanskrit love poems translated into English. I am in charge of making the first selections. Perhaps this summer I might take a week off to come visit.

I love you,

Ram

(He sends. Sits. Turns off light.)

(blackout)

(Beep. VIC V.O. leaving a message, club noise in background.)

(words on screen)

VIC. Hey Ram.! It's Vic Jones here, miss you, so how's it going – ? You know, I think you left something at my apartment – I realized you don't have my number – give me a call, it's – uh – 555..., what?? No, I'm on the phone, asshole – ok ok! Sorry about that, it's nuts here, so anyway, my number is 555 —

(blackout)

Scene Four

(Lights up on MAGGIE & FREE's apartment. VIC has been drinking and is having trouble remembering to sign, so MAGGIE interprets.)

(ASL not on screen)

VIC. [Fuck you!]

MAGGIE. Vic!

VIC. Vic shit Vic fuck you

MAGGIE. [Vic, I'm just saying that you need to calm down, it's impossible to have a conversation like this]

VIC./MAGGIE. Oh, I need to calm down? You know what, [you're a fucking snob! Magg Magg. Magna Cum Laude. Oh wait, let me show you my high school diploma, cuz I got an A in English, you hag!]

FREE. [Maggie. Go.]

MAGGIE. [I can stay]

VIC./MAGGIE. [Oh no, you go, who needs you? My sister and I communicated just fine before you, during you, and after you]

MAGGIE. [I'm staying, we're fine]

FREE. (to VIC) [Hey! You sign like shit, and you know it. We never 'communicated' at all before Maggie.]

MAGGIE. [Free...]

VIC./MAGGIE. [I sign a fuckload better than you talk!]
[Free the Deaf Dyke! That's what they call you at home, the Deaf Dyke!]
[I'm the only one that comes to see you two. And you never fucking support me! Not once]

MAGGIE. [(We support you)]

VIC./MAGGIE. (cont.) [It's not like he's too good for me! Is that what you think? You think he's too good for me? I should go back to like Jake the asshole?]

FREE. [Wait, wait, wait, you're back with Jake?]

VIC. [No, I'm not back with Jake!] I'm fucking moving on! Cuz you see this? [This is our poem! Ram read me this poem the first night we met, and it's a fucking love poem, ok?] What the hell do you know anyway –

FREE. [Stop! Ram is not interested in you. He's not calling you.]

VIC. [Oh, fuck you, so he hasn't called me, it's been, what, a week? He's busy!]

FREE. [Stop drinking]

(hurt silence)

VIC./MAGGIE. [So why do you get a Professor and I don't, huh? I graduated high school just like you. Better than you. Maggie, did you check her grades before you started fucking her? When she filled out the application...] *(starts laughing)* [for the damn job...check her transcript? Or maybe the competition wasn't so hot, you're getting older after all and ... whew... it can be tough at those singles mixers when you're interestingly – abled like the two of you...] [Deaf and Boring walk into a bar...]

(MAGGIE stops interpreting to interrupt her.)

MAGGIE. [Stop it. Why are you doing this?]

VIC. [I'm making myself feel better]

FREE. [Do you feel better?]

VIC./MAGGIE. [I do feel better, thank you Free! I feel free! Free. to say whatever I want because, hell, no one listens to me anyway! Freeeee. Freeeeeeee. Oh! Funny funny stuff.]

FREE. [Get out...]

(MAGGIE shakes her head at FREE to wait for VIC to calm down.)

(They have a quick exchange in ASL, English on screen.)

MAGGIE. [She can't drive]

FREE. [Then she can walk, and you can stop interpreting, I don't need to hear her]

MAGGIE. [She's just lashing out, she's hurt – you could have a little empathy here]

FREE. [Why? You're taking care of it.]

(screen off)

VIC. *(collapsing onto the couch)* I don't feel good

FREE. [If you're going to vomit, go to the bathroom]

VIC./MAGGIE. [Fucking men, I wish I was a dyke.
[God I feel like shit, I hate this.]

MAGGIE. [Stay put, I'll get you some water, should I make coffee?]

VIC./MAGGIE. [I fucking fucked up. I hate this! I hate me!]

FREE./MAGGIE. [What are you talking about?]

VIC./MAGGIE. [Stupid, stupid, I called him from the club and left this dumbass message – “no big deal – hey, I think you left something at my apartment – give me a call...” like a fucking loser...]

FREE./MAGGIE. [Did he leave something at your apartment?]

VIC./MAGGIE. [No. I mean, what am I, twelve? I'm just so tired of this shit, you know? I don't like being alone]

FREE. [Look at me! Maybe you need to be alone]

VIC./MAGGIE. [I hate my life. What if I never like my life?]

FREE. [You'll like it better without some asshole hanging around making you miserable]

VIC./MAGGIE. Shit shit shit – Magg, [I want to call him] again, ok? [Come on], before I lose my nerve, and I want to sound like I'm not a complete asshole –

FREE. [He doesn't want to talk to you!]

VIC./MAGGIE. [Fine, whatever, he doesn't have to call back, right? I just need to call him.]

FREE. [So fuck him. He's a loser]

VIC./MAGGIE. [He's not a loser, he's just a nice guy! What, I don't deserve that?]

[Yeah. Just butt out. I want to call him. Maggie, I want to call him!]

MAGGIE. [OK. OK. Let's just, hang on – let's get some paper] –

(FREE *is being ignored.*)

FREE. [You don't need me for this, I'm taking a shower]

MAGGIE. [All I can advise is honesty. I mean, is that what you want to hear?]

VIC. OK

MAGGIE. OK?

VIC. I mean, OK, whatever the fuck you say. Really.

Sorry about mouthing off earlier, I was just... you know. [Sorry.]

MAGGIE. [Vic, we love you, you know that. But he doesn't sound like he's...]

[But that's ok! You can call him, and then you'll have tried.]

[First things first – you should write it down, so you don't stumble, I do that with important phone calls. Here.]

[Ok, so tell me how you feel!]

(FREE *exits, frustrated.*)

VIC. Nice shrink-voice

MAGGIE. [Vic]

VIC. OK, OK, I feel... I want him to come back.

MAGGIE. [You want him to come back, and...?]

(MAGGIE *notices that FREE has left.*)

[Come on.]

VIC. And sweep me off my feet, shit!

He's nice... and he thinks I'm just this... I don't know what, and that pisses me off –

MAGGIE. [OK. OK, let's keep it simple –]

(Beep. crossfade to RAM listening to Vic's voice mail.)

(words on screen)

VIC. (V.O.) Hi Ram! I wasn't totally honest earlier, you didn't leave anything at my apartment except me. I miss you, and I'd like to keep talking to you. I hope you call me. Maybe I'll shoot you an email, and then you'll have my address, if you want it. Ok? Bye.

(RAM deletes the message. "MESSAGE DELETED.")

(He sits at his computer working.)

(Lights come up slowly on Maggie and Free's apartment. MAGGIE has gone to bed, VIC is passed out on the couch.)

(FREE can't sleep, she covers VIC with a blanket, looks at her for a moment.)

(She finds the poem on the floor and starts to tuck it under VIC's hand, then stops and reads it. As she reads, the English translation of Ram's poem from top of play appears on the screen.)

(FREE signs to herself, making sense of it.)

(ASL not on screen)

FREE. [Foolish man – Foolish people... value things, not important, holding on to worthless things is not safe... freedom...what is freedom? Emotion should be valued.]

[My opinion – naked... love, sex... her dress off... eye contact... I fall... emotions soar –]

(She reads the poem again. She strokes VIC's forehead.)

(ASL ON SCREEN)

[Beautiful sister. He's a coward.]

(VIC sleeps.)

(Suddenly angry with Ram, FREE grabs her BlackBerry and enters his email address off the letterhead.)

(email appears on screen)

TO: balaram@bostonuniversity.edu

FROM: jonesgirl@peopleinc.com

RE: YOUR POEM

fool

you do not value emotion

you are not free

woman dancing, eyes connect, naked body, heart
soars –

this is free

(FREE sends, feels a little better.)

(She tucks the poem under VIC's hand.)

(Sits and thinks. Lonely.)

(RAM sees Free's email.)

RAM. Oh, shit...

(Her email affects him, he types.)

TO: jonesgirl

FROM: Balaram

RE: Re. YOUR POEM

You're right. I'm a coward.

I'm not good at relationships with real people, and
I've behaved badly. I have always lacked romantic
courage. Except possibly on paper.

Sorry.

Ram.

*(Free's Blackberry lights up. FREE reads, surprised.
She feels guilty, types.)*

TO: Balaram

FROM: Jonesgirl

I am sorry. I am rude. your life, your choice.

I like your poem. it describes love well

(RAM types.)

TO: Jonesgirl

FROM: Balaram

I like your version. Very to the point as translations
go.

(FREE smiles, types.)

TO: Balaram

FROM: Jonesgirl

translation sucks, remember?

I like mind meld like star trek for communication
:)

(RAM smiles. Types.)

TO: Jonesgirl

FROM: Balaram

That would simplify things

(lights fade)

(blackout)

PART II

Scene One

(V.O. RAM reciting Bhavabhuti's Uttararamacarita, I. 27. Sanskrit on screen. Simultaneously FREE in lone spotlight/streetlight performs the poem in ASL.)

RAM.

Kimapi kimapi mandam mandam asaktiyogad
Aviralitakapolam jalpator akramena
Asithilaparirambhavyaprtakadosnor
Aviditagatayama ratrir eva vyaramsit

(Lights up on FREE receiving an email on her Blackberry, stopping to read it. The email appears on screen.)

TO: Jonesgirl

FROM: Balaram

Jonesgirl! I gave a talk on this poem this morning,
see what you think –)

(Lights up on RAM speaking to students positioned in the audience. He is not a naturally charismatic speaker, but does his best to engage. The result is awkward and he laughs at too many of his own jokes.)

(Email cont.)

Deep in love
Cheek leaning on cheek
we talked

Deep in love
Cheek leaning on cheek
we talked

Of whatever came into
 our minds
 Just as it came
 Slowly oh
 Slowly
 With our arms twined
 Tightly around us
 And the hours passed
 and we
 Did not know it
 Still talking when
 The night had gone

 Not bad, eh? Now, as the
 story goes the
 poet Bhavabhuti
 brought the Uttara –
 macarita to the great
 Kalidasa,
 interrupting him in the
 middle of a chess
 game. Not just this piece
 that I just read
 you, understand, but the
 whole
 Uttaramacarita! You'll
 have to take my
 word for it, it's not a
 quick read. He
 interrupts Kalidasa in his
 chess match to
 recite him this great new
 work, and recites
 it from beginning to end
 with not one
 interruption from the
 great master!

Of whatever came into
 our minds
 Just as it came
 Slowly oh
 Slowly
 With our arms twined
 Tightly around us
 And the hours passed
 and we
 Did not know it
 Still talking when
 The night had gone

 Not bad, right? I follow
 up with this
 anecdote, it's very funny.
 The poet
 Bhavabhuti brought the
 Uttaramacarita to
 the great Kalidasa, inter-
 rupting him in the
 middle of a chess game.

 Not just this piece but
 the whole
 Uttaramacarita –

 it's not a quick read!

 He interrupts Kalidasa in
 his chess match to
 recite this great new
 work, and recites it
 from beginning to end
 with not one
 interruption from the
 great master!

Unlike today, in those
days all things
would stop for great art.
No warning or
preparation, but Kalidas
stops his playing
instantly to listen. These
days we stop for
commercials, not for art,
eh? Hahah!

Art does not flow unin-
terrupted these
days... does it?

Does it? No!
And there you
have another reason to
study Sanskrit!

But to return to my pri-
mary point in this
possibly apocryphal
story. When he
finished, Kalidasa leaned
forward! He
moved one piece on the
board, check –
mating his opponent.
And then he
turned to Bhavabhuti
and said,

“There is but one imper-
fection in your entire
poem. There is one
letter ‘m’ too many!

Unlike today, in those
days all things
would stop for great art.
No warning or
preparation, but Kali-
dasa stops his playing
instantly to listen! These
days we stop for
commercials, not for art.

Art does not flow unin-
terrupted these days!

See I thought that was
funny, but no one
laughed.

Anyway, when he fin-
ished,
Kalidasa leaned forward.

He moved one piece on
the board,
check – mating his
opponent.

And then he turned to
Bhavabhuti
and said,

“There is but one imper-
fection in your entire
poem. There is one
letter ‘m’ too many!

*(Sanskrit returns to screen briefly before email con-
tinues.)*

You see this word?
 'Eva'...? It was
 originally 'Evam' mean-
 ing in effect that
 the lovers spoke and
 spoke until the night
 had passed! But with the
 removal of this
 one letter – 'm' – the
 word became 'eva'...
 'Aviditagatayama ratrir
 eva vyaramsit'...
 and now the lovers
 spoke and spoke and
 although night passed
 they continued to speak.
 For how long? Perhaps
 for all eternity? With the
 removal of one 'm'!
 One 'm'. This is San-
 skrit! So! If you find
 this fascinating, if you
 find this
 'm' here or there fasci-
 nating – you should
 definitely study Sanskrit!
 And if not, hang on to
 this photocopy
 and impress a girl on
 your next date! Or
 a boy! It works just as
 well for the ladies,
 enjoy it as my gift. I can
 take any
 questions now?

Look at the poem again
 – you see the word
 'Eva'? It was originally
 'Evam' which
 means that the lovers
 spoke until the night
 had passed! But take
 away that
 'm' and the word
 becomes 'eva'

And now the lovers
 spoke and spoke and
 although night passed
 they continued to speak.
 For how long? Per-
 haps forever? With the
 removal of one 'm'!
 One 'm'. This is San-
 skrit!

I find this fascinating!

I find this 'm' here or
 there fascinating!
 I don't know if they did.
 But I told them to keep
 the photocopy
 and impress their next
 date!

What do you think?

R.

(screen switches to IM.)

No questions?	Hello?
You're sure?	Did I put you to sleep?
Well, that's alright, enjoy the rest of your sampler week and I hope to see some of you next semester.	Half of them were asleep.
Oh, yes sorry, you in the back?	
Yes the cafeteria is across the plaza.	The other half were apparently starved and desperate to find the cafeteria.
No problem.	

(Lights shift, RAM is home, it's evening. The emails flash up on the screen as they are received, fading to black before the next one arrives.)

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: BALARAM
Hello?

TO: Balaram
FROM: jonesgirl

I'm here.
good story. but truth is talk stops in morning.
poet was right.

TO: jonesgirl
FROM: balaram

It's an ideal, a beautiful ideal. Why do you think
talk stops? Don't you think some people keep talk-
ing their whole lives?

TO: balaram

FROM: jonesgirl

not really. life goes on in morning, people get out of bed and have to go. that is the problem. then you are apart all day and when you come home you are different person.

TO: jonesgirl

FROM: balaram

Cynic

TO: balaram

FROM: jonesgirl

math

work, sleep, eat. time together is very little.

TO: jonesgirl

FROM: balaram

That's a sad thought. What about us?

TO: balaram

FROM: jonesgirl

talk at night. apart in day. everything is different.

TO: jonesgirl

FROM: balaram

I'll call you tomorrow morning.

(Lights fade up on FREE. She is confused and doesn't respond.)

Vic?

(FREE drops the Blackberry and backs away from it. How the hell did this happen?)

Are you there?

(FREE can't decide whether to respond or cease communication. Finally she types –)

TO: balaram

FROM: jonesgirl

why?

(**FREE** waits.)

TO: jonesgirl

FROM: balaram

So we can talk.

Cheek to cheek

(Screen goes dark. Lights fade completely on **RAM**.)

(The door opens and **MAGGIE** comes in. She's late.)

(**FREE** conceals her Blackberry, turns her frustration on **MAGGIE**.)

(ASL on screen)

FREE. [Where the fuck were you?]

MAGGIE. [We got to talking, what are you doing up?]

FREE. [Waiting for you, what do you think?]

MAGGIE. [I'm sorry, I thought you'd be asleep]

(Beat. **FREE** stares at her Blackberry, then puts it away.)

[Hey, what's wrong?]

FREE. [Whatever, I don't care, I need to get some sleep]

MAGGIE. [It was a really good party, you should have been there! Everyone asked about you]

FREE. [No reason for me to go be bored]

MAGGIE. [I think you'd like some of the faculty if you got to know them.]

FREE. [It's not like you ever come out with my friends]

MAGGIE. [Twice, I couldn't make it. Twice!]

FREE. [But you're so important, you have to go to a party every weekend]

MAGGIE. [You should get out of the house, see more people – maybe then you wouldn't be so crabby all the time]

FREE. [Don't try to psychoanalyze me. I'm crabby because you stayed out until 2 am. I'm crabby because I worried about you. I'm crabby because now I haven't slept and I have work in the morning, that's why I'm crabby]

MAGGIE. [OK, you're pissed, I'm sorry]

FREE. [Good night.]

(FREE exits. Blackout.)

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