

Next Paris
by
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An excerpt

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SCENE 1

Lights dim. A park. #2 stands in the middle of the stage. MR. LEE surreptitiously circles #2, ducking behind trees.

#2

Hey.

MR. LEE stops. He looks around, nervously.

#2

That's right. I'm talkin' to you.

MR. LEE peeks around the tree.

Blackout.

SCENE 2

MRS. LEE sits on top of her gigantic TV in heels and a rather short skirt, bathed in a lone spotlight. She addresses the audience.

MRS. LEE

America. Ha. All my family laughed at me. Looked down their noses -- America, they say. You crazy. We cannot believe these things you say. Why you want to go there? America is place full of danger -- sins everywhere to see. What a shameful place! No dignity. No respect.

#2 and #3 enter. They stand on either side of MRS. LEE and watch her, sternly.

MRS. LEE

You must take care of your parents. Korea is your home. Family is most important. Marry a nice Korean man. Raise nice Korean man. America -- it does not know you. You do not know America. You must stay!

MRS. LEE stands on top of the TV.

MRS. LEE

I stand up tall to my family.

(proclaims)

I do not care what you think! I do what I want! I do not stay stuck in one room home cleaning and cleaning and cleaning. I don't want broken back and rubber shoes. Then no one will see me.

MRS. LEE coyly lifts up her skirt to show off one leg. #2 and #3 admire.

MRS. LEE

My legs! Look at my legs!

MRS. LEE holds out her hands to #2 and #3. They hoist MRS. LEE onto their shoulders.

MRS. LEE

Do you see? I belong in America, where people can see my legs! I will be big star!

Brassy, big band music plays. #2 and #3 parade MRS. LEE around the stage while MRS. LEE strikes a series of poses. The song ends, and #2 and #3 set MRS. LEE back onto the TV and exit.

MRS. LEE
(to the audience)
What you think? Do I have a future? Yes?

(beat)
No?

MRS. LEE (CONT'D)
Anyone want to say something to me?

(searches the audience)
You think no. This quiet means no. You can say it.

(beat)
Someone - please say something.

(beat)
Fine. Later, you see.

SCENE 3

The Lee's living room. MRS. LEE sits
in her armchair, watching TV. PAULA
irons a dress.

PAULA
Mom.

(beat)
Mom!

(beat)
Mom, could you stop watching the damn TV for just a moment
and listen to me? Okay?

PAULA sets the iron down and walks over
to the TV. She snaps it off.

PAULA
When was the last time you went to the store?

MRS. LEE continues to stare at the TV.

PAULA

Ma!

MRS. LEE

Jonathan is taking care of all things.

PAULA

Jonathan is a meathead.

MRS. LEE

He is very nice boy.

PAULA

Jonathan should not floss his teeth unattended, let alone run our store by his idiot self.

MRS. LEE

Well, Jonathan is only one left. You are gone to college. What can I do?

PAULA

Fire him.

MRS. LEE

He is nice to me.

PAULA

And hire someone else.

MRS. LEE

Not like you.

PAULA

Jonathan is a pothead will inevitably burn the store down while trying to convert the storage room into a hotbox. You have to go in and check up on him.

MRS. LEE

(sighs)

Paula, soon, I go.

PAULA

When? When's the last time you left the house? A month? You refuse to see anyone. You don't even go to the grocery store. You're completely out of seaweed.

Oh? MRS. LEE

And soy sauce. PAULA

Oh. MRS. LEE

There are no vegetables to speak of. PAULA

Oh. MRS. LEE

No kimchee. PAULA

Hmmm. MRS. LEE

And -- no rice. PAULA

Wow. MRS. LEE

What have you been doing? Dipping your finger into the bean paste jar? PAULA

PAULA goes back to her ironing. MRS. LEE turns the TV back on.

Lights shift. #1, #2, and #3 enter and watch the TV with MRS. LEE.

Whatcha watching? #1

I don't know. MRS. LEE

Looks like some moralizing cheeseball TV special to me. #3

#2

(announces)

Tune it to find out what happens when the mother finds out that her dutiful daughter has actually been peddling crack cocaine.

#1

(puts arm around #2)

Oh no! Not our daughter!

#2

Our daughter is very dutiful.

#1

We always think we know our daughters. And then...

#2

We get a phone call. In the middle of the night.

#3

(horrified)

I thought she was at college!

MRS. LEE

She is! Very good college.

#3

(looks at PAULA)

Then why is she here?

PAULA

As soon as she leaves this house and goes back to work, I'll be on my way.

#3 walks over to PAULA.

#3

So whatchu doin' here?

PAULA

(confidentially)

My mom's having problems.

#1

(moving closer to PAULA)

With what?

#2

I heard she hasn't left the house since--

PAULA
 (sharp)
 Shut up!

#2
 All of us at church are praying for her.

#1
 All of us.

#3
 Is she going to come to the wedding? Everyone's coming!

#2
 We'd be so disappointed if she didn't show...

PAULA
 Mom. Are you going to go to Jessica's wedding?

MRS. LEE
 No.

PAULA
 No? Just like that?

MRS. LEE
 Yes. Just no.

PAULA
 Mom, people are worried about you.

#1, #2, and #3 nod their heads in
 virtuous agreement.

PAULA
 You should get out--

MRS. LEE
 --You think I go to place where everyone laughs at me?

PAULA
 Look, mom, you gotta show everyone you're okay. Jessica's
 wedding is the perfect opportunity. It's a huge party,
 everyone will be too busy trying to look sober to laugh at
 you.

MRS. LEE turns away from PAULA.

PAULA

Ma... it's just, well... people are talking cause you're not... taking care of yourself.

#1

Perhaps the daughter innocently returns home one day to discover that her mother has been converted by a radical separatist group of Mormons and is providing safe harbor for their rogue, outlaw preacher--

PAULA

--Look, I'll even go with you.

(beat)

I hope you can appreciate the generosity of my offer.

MRS. LEE

I already say no.

PAULA

Ma...

#3

(to Paula)

Let me handle this.

#3 approaches MRS. LEE.

#3

What do you do at home all day? Pick the lint off your raggedy housecoat? Wouldn't you prefer to be surrounded by people who care you? Stand up. Let us all go to church, together.

MRS. LEE

I am not saying a word to you.

#3

Why not?

#2

Maybe she's got something to hide.

#1

I like the sound of "Trapped: The Rogue Mormons' Last Stand".

#2

(shoots a suspicious look at
PAULA)

I'm bettin' on the crack-peddling daughter story line.

#3

Before you place your bets, chew on this: what's the father's story?

#1 AND #2

(simultaneously)

Hmmmm....

#2

Whatever it is, I can assure you, he's up to no good.

#1

Agreed. I sense... tragedy.

#2

Church bells tolling in the distance....

#3

(to PAULA)

It's best that you keep an eye on your mother.

#2

(to MRS. LEE)

And you should keep an eye on your daughter.

#1

You never know.

MRS. LEE

I'm sure she's fine.

PAULA

I'm sure she's fine.

Blackout.