

CHINESE THEATER

A Short Play

By

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Runtime: 20 minutes

Synopsis: A tale of misguided tourists exposing a web of
bizarre truths.

CHARACTERS

LINDA	Determined tourist on a mission.
FRANKLIN	Laid back traveler with a touch of mystery.
JOJO	A street music aficionado salesman specialist consultant with a secret.
SPLLEEF	Androgynous free spirit & occasional street artist.
OTHERS	1-4 Background people, if desired, to portray people in the crowd and café.

SETTING

On Sunset Blvd, in front of the Chinese Theater.

TIME

Midday. Some time in the late 1980s.

SCENES

Scene 1	On the street	Around noon on a Saturday.
Scene 2	Café/ In the alley outside the café.	Only minutes later & at times both the inside and outside moments happen simultaneously.
Scene 3	On the street	A different day much later.

SCENE 1

(On Sunset Blvd. LINDA and FRANKLIN enter. Linda has a large camera around her neck.)

LINDA

We absolutely must get to Pink's before the line gets too long?

FRANKLIN

(Sarcastic.)

Let's not forget the pits of tar and standing in famous peoples foot prints.

LINDA

(Oblivious.)

Of course! I can't believe I didn't think of those. I'm so—

(Linda freezes as the couple turns a corner. She sees something in the distance that stops her short.)

FRANKLIN

What is up?

LINDA

Shh. Bag your face!

FRANKLIN

Don't tell me to shut up. Why are you being—

LINDA

(SPLEEF brushes by Linda and disappears behind a crowd on the street offstage.)

Wha? For serious?

(A scream is heard from Linda.)

FRANKLIN

Gah? What's your damage?

LINDA

Ohhhh my god! I think that was Jaike Lumbertints!

FRANKLIN

Who?

LINDA

Stop messing with me. You know who he is.

FRANKLIN

The "musician?"

LINDA

Gag me with a spoon. I'm not gonna wash my shoulder for a month. That was definitely him! I can't believe it! He's such a Clydesdale!

FRANKLIN

Yea, right. That guy's a major tool.

LINDA

(The couple is surrounded by distractions and Linda is completely unaware of Franklin.)

I swear that was him. Maybe there's a movie premier going on or something. I would so love to...

(Short pause.)

- meet him.

FRANKLIN

I'm sure you would.

(He looks around for a way out of that moment when suddenly he bumps into JOJO on the street. Jojo is very much in their faces and an intense personality.)

JOJO

Eh-yo! Yo? Ya got the time for me to blow ya mind?

LINDA

(Under her breath.)

Honey. Just keep walking.

JOJO

Eh-yo! Yo? Where yous guys from?

FRANKLIN

Philly!

JOJO

(Stopped in his tracks, stunned face.)

NO SHIT!

(Jojo lifts up his right sleeve on his shirt and shows a huge 'PHILLY' tattoo on his right arm.)

I'm from Philly, my brotha!

LINDA

(Unenthusiastic and snarky.)

Wow... what are the odds?

JOJO

Yo, you guys gotta support ya brotha Jojo with a little brotha-ly love. Buy my new album!

FRANKLIN

(At the same time as Linda.)

What d'ya sound like?

LINDA

(At the same time as Franklin.)

We're not interested!

(Linda and Franklin catch each other's glares for a brief moment.)

JOJO

(Apparently only hearing Franklin.)

Listen to this shit!

(Jojo slams Linda and Franklin against eachother and they react strangely, as though they have never been this close before. Jojo takes his giant headphones and puts them over the couple, each of them has only one side to listen to so they can share the headphones. The headphones smell and feel like they have been worn by a thousand weary travelers.)

JOJO (Continued)

Feel it!

(The audience is treated to the sounds emanating from the headphones as the music starts abruptly. It sounds like animal mating noises without regard to species mixed with some sort of slam poetry about foods overlaid with food sounds and sounds of people eating. The cacophony is occasionally broken by a beautiful voice singing only the following: splEEEEEEEEEE-eeeeee-eee-EEEEEE-eee-EEEEEEef.)

LINDA

What was that?

JOJO

It's da newest music genre and I'm at da forefront!
'scalled Libido-Frustrato. And I'm at da forefront!

FRANKLIN

Sounds pretty strange, except for that angelic voice
at the end of all that noise.

JOJO

Well, man- my man Jaike Lumbertints said I be takin'
over da airwaves in no time sa-

LINDA

You know JAIKE LUMBERTINTS!?

JOJO

Uh.. Yea...girl. He mah Niblin'!

FRANKLIN

Nibbling?

JOJO

I mean, uh, he mah—

LINDA

(Enthralled.)

Ohh. Wow! Does he live in LA? I knew I bumped into him just now.

JOJO

Hell yea— he live in norf hollywood. Wanna meet 'em?

LINDA

Of course I do!

(Jojo walks the gang down the street and out of the crowd saunters the one, the only— Spleef, a person who looks vaguely like Jaike Lumbertints. Linda nearly faints and they awkwardly stand in front of each other. Linda forces a meet-cute by clumsily pretending to trip and bump into Jaike. She giggles wordlessly stutters. Finally she manages to speak.)

LINDA

-Uh! JAIKE LUMBERTINTS!!!! I loved your last album! Love. Like, I still love it. I fall asleep listening to your voice. It was Earth-shattering for me. I totally relate to all of your love and angst and other emotional stuff. And I really had a super deep connection to "Funk and Grind," ya know, 'cause I totally lost my virginity to that song. But not like I'm a skank or anything, unless you like that. I mean it wasn't even that good, but— but that was the guy. The guy was horrible, but I was amazing.

SPLLEEF

Whoa. Take a chill pill beautiful! Let's just enjoy now.

LINDA

Oh! Jaike, of course. I'm a very zen person. I'm totally about the now, ya know.

LINDA (Continued.)

I like to clear my mind... and relax... and I do yoga... once, I did yoga once!

SPLLEEF

I dig it babe! Why don't we go grab some lunch and chill out for a minute—

JOJO

(Suddenly uncomfortable.)

Uh! A café is not the best—

(Notices Franklin looking at him strangely, though Linda's gaze has not left Spleef since arriving.)

...uh yeah! Nah... nah, I be good.

FRANKLIN

I saw a delicious bakery place—

JOJO

Emmmmmm!

(Stops when he notices everyone staring at him.)

FRANKLIN

(Continues.)

It was around the corner. Unless of course that's too low brow for you?

SPLLEEF

No. Of course not. I'm a man of the people. I think it's called Aroma café. I've been there a few times before. It's a solid place.

JOJO

(Finally bursts out orgasmically.)

Ohhh! Uhhh. Yes~! I f**ked the shit outta their sweet Babka., in the...in a pasty eating contest there. I'm hafta keep a low profile ya kna, so I dun't make no one jellus?

LINDA

Right. Okay. Calm down brother-man.

FRANKLIN

Yeah, Let's get your nibbling to the café.

SPLEEF

You told them about that? It happened once. It isn't anything special!

JOJO

Uh... yeah. I told them you was my, my-

LINDA

Nephew? I heard somebody say that before. Like sibling but with nieces and nephews.

SPLEEF

Wow, I never knew that.

FRANKLIN

Learn something new every day.

JOJO

Ah-ha, yep, we go way back. You know, to when he was born.

FRANKLIN

Alright then. Lets get some grub.

(The scene ends with lights out and/or they transition directly into the next scene at the café.)

SCENE 2

(Inside Aroma Café, still midday. The gang enters the restaurant and Jojo has his head under his shirt and is awkwardly crouching and trying to avoid being seen while he is there. Spleef and Franklin are having a staring contest as soon as they sit down.)

LINDA

So who would you say is your ideal woman?

(Spleef and Franklin break their gaze.)

SPLEEF

You have to order up at the counter and they'll bring it out.

LINDA

Okay, Franklin can you order me a Mocha Shadazzle and a slice of cherry pie!

(She winks at Spleef.)

FRANKLIN

Why do I have to go?

LINDA

Please hun, you're being rude to our guests.

FRANKLIN

Aren't we the guests in their city?

SPLEEF

Yes. You are. I'll grab the food.

JOJO

FOOD!

SPLEEF

What do you all want? Franklin?

FRANKLIN

A gin martini.

SPLEEF

That's it?

FRANKLIN

Yes. With just a splash of the truth.

SPLEEF

The truth?

FRANKLIN

Vermouth... Why'd you said that though? Feeling honest? Something to tell us?

LINDA

No, I think you actually said 'the truth' hun. And why are you drinking a martini at a coffeehouse during lunch?

FRANKLIN

I enj—

SPLEEF

And Jojo?

JOJO

Uh. G'yeah. I'll—

SPLEEF

You know what, I got it. I know what you want. I'll be right back.

LINDA

Are sure you don't need a hand?

(Erotic hand gesture.)

SPLEEF

No I'm fine. Thanks.

(Spleef exits for a moment.)

FRANKLIN

Jojo, as soon as we walked in here you stopped talking? What's up? I thought we were going to be tortur— treated to your wonderful new sound?

LINDA

If jojo doesn't want to show us—

JOJO

(Increasingly frustrated and erratic.)

I got beets, but I just wanna eat em up ya kno?
Candied, raw, whatever. So I gotta keep that shit
under control. No pressure, ya know. I just wanna
focus on the food, and den maybe we can talk.

FRANKLIN

Lettuce give you some space then. Speaking of food
darling, gee you know we never did get over to Pinks
for lunch, hun. Guess this place will just have to
do.

LINDA

(Annoyed that this moment is once again
with Franklin and not Jaike.)

Yeah. Who gives a crap about Pinks?

FRANKLIN

I thought you did.

(Spleef returns with food and drinks.)

LINDA

(Sudden attitude swing.)

All I care about is eating out with my new friend,
here.

FRANKLIN

Ya know Jaike, this might be strange but would you
mind singing one of your songs for us, just a quick
acapella version?

LINDA

Franklin, That's so inappropriate— unless you wanted
to Jaike.

SPLEEF

Ya know, I don't mind, but I should probably sing
something new. I'm working on a new tune right now.

(Spleef sings a brief little ditty akin to 80s boy bands but never actually says any real words. His voice is surprisingly beautiful.)

SPLEEF (Continued.)

OIOOOO OHHH
UHHH HUHHHHH
EHHHHHH OHHHHH
OIOOOO OHHH

(Linda melts. Franklin melts. Jojo masticates a tuna melt.)

LINDA

That was—

JOJO

Truly scrumptous.

LINDA

I was gonna say it was beautiful but I don't mind a good Chitty Chitty BANG BANG reference either? How 'bout you, Jaike?

FRANKLIN

(He abruptly stands up.)

Dammit Linda! Jaike and I need to step outside for a minute.

SPLEEF

Wha?

LINDA

Don't be an such a-

FRANKLIN

I'll be nothing but a perfect gentleman. I only want to talk in private. Would you oblige me?

SPLEEF

Uh sure.

(While the alleyway encounter is happening, the inside café activity is still happening simultaneously.)

Perhaps the lights are dimmed on that side of the stage and there are no sounds but the actors are still acting. Spleef and Franklin enter the alleyway.)

FRANKLIN

I figured you out LUMBER-TITS!

SPLEEF

I swear I'm not into LINDA!

FRANKLIN

Linda? This isn't about Linda? This is about you!

SPLEEF

Okay, what's up then?

FRANKLIN

I know who you really are!

(Franklin starts getting increasingly closer to Spleef.)

SPLEEF

You don't know me.

FRANKLIN

I know you're not Jaike Lumbertints.

SPLEEF

What? You don't know—

FRANKLIN

Come on! That Jaike Lumbertints has a mole on his check.

(Franklin points to a poster of Jaike Lumbertints' on the alley wall, specifically at the mole. Simultaneously Jojo starts silently going off the rails a little inside the café.)

SPLEEF

That's not true. Somebody probably just graffiti'd that on there.

FRANKLIN

Or that Jaike Lumbertints and the entire Lumbertints family is Welsh and that's its highly unlikely your uncle, whose only a few years older than you by the way, is born and raised in LA.

SPLEEF

Unlikely, but not untrue. He's my uncle through marriage. To my aunt... Nessie.

FRANKLIN

I don't buy it, but it doesn't matter. 'Cause ya know what really gave it all away?

(Suddenly his tone changes from investigatorial to infatuated.)

When you sang in there and that beautiful voice sounded nothing like Jaike Lumbertints or anything I've heard before today. And it was the same voice on Jojo's trashy track. It was the only thing that kept me from ripping my ears off during that song but it was beautiful.

SPLEEF

It was?

FRANKLIN

In my whole life I never thought I could fall in love with someone so quickly and so intensely simply from hearing their voice.

SPLEEF

Oh Franklin, do you really mean all this?

FRANKLIN

Of course.

SPLEEF

You're completely right. I'm a kid who ran away and has been trying to make it. You know, someone said I looked like Lumbertints and I went with it.

FRANKLIN

I fell for your voice and for you. I don't care about your alter-ego.

SPLEEF

I felt the connection since we eyed each other on the street.

(Franklin and Spleef are extremely close to meeting lips. Franklin pulls back a bit to speak.)

FRANKLIN

You have a lot of sway over those stupid tourists, huh?

SPLEEF

All the tourists pay a lot just for pictures with me. I think most of 'em know I'm not the real guy, but they still wanna take a picture so they bust out their polaroids and wallets and start snappin' away.

(Spleef finally pulls Franklin in but he resists.)

FRANKLIN

And then you get them to buy you a free lunch, or dinner, or whatever you can get, huh?

SPLEEF

What?

FRANKLIN

And then you don't pay taxes for 5 years even though you make six figures pretending you're a homeless person?

SPLEEF

Where is this coming from? I thought you loved me?

FRANKLIN

I only love the law.

(Franklin flips Spleef over and up against the wall. He shows his badge.)

I am with the IRS NCIS LAPD joint task force and you've defrauded us all for too long.

(Jojo finally loses it in the café as spleef is going on this rant.)

SPLEEF

No! It wasn't my idea. It was all Jojo. He's got this weird food obsession.

SPLEEF (Continued.)

We were dating a while back and he wanted me to feed him food in wild intimate scenarios. He was the nibbler and I was the nibbling. And sometimes he would feed me. He is addicted to sex with all different kinds of food.

(Franklin finally starts handcuffing Spleef and pulling him away as Spleef resists.)

SPLEEF (Continued.)

He thought up this whole scheme just so he could get free food from this restaurant to fornicate with, I swear.

FRANKLIN

That's a bunch of bologna!

SPLEEF

I was actually hungry but he was lustful. And he's been kicked outta most places in town, so he tries to sneak back in with unsuspecting tourist!!

FRANKLIN

You know you're a real sick-o Spleef Jones, trying to get a way with tax evasion and putting it all on some poor aspiring artist. It's despicable.

(Franklin takes Spleef offstage in handcuffs. The alleyway portion of the scene goes dim as the interior café fades back in. Jojo's food molestation has gotten to an extreme level. Linda is freaking out and can't handle it anymore.)

LINDA

This is disgusting! Uh!

JOJO

(Through a mouthful of food.)

I have a real problem! I can't help myself! Bah!!!
UHH OHH YEAH!! I love when you're in all my crev-nom-
um! I love everything about you! Emmmmm-

Linda gives up and exits the café into the alleyway. Lights are up on both now. Jojo is getting jostled around and Linda finds herself in an empty alley way. Spleef and Franklin have left. Jojo gets dragged out of the restaurant but not before pocketing most of the food that was on the table. Linda exits the alley and returns to the café. She stands alone again. Lights down.)

SCENE 3

(Lights up.)

JOJO

Ya'll got time for me to blow ya mind?

(MAN and WOMAN walk by trying to ignore Jojo.)

Eh-there! Eh? Where ya'll from?

WOMAN

Atlanta!

JOJO

(Stopped in his tracks, stunned face.)

NO SHIT!

(Jojo lifts up his left sleeve on his shirt and shows a huge 'ATLANTA' tattoo on his left arm.)

I'm from Atlanta!

(Jojo makes a cheeky grin toward the audience. Blackout.)