

TRANCE

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Characters

MASA TACHIARA

A man in his early thirties, a freelance writer writing anonymous articles for mediocre magazines.

REIKO BENITANI

A woman in her early thirties, a psychiatrist working at a mental hospital.

SANZO GOTO

A gay man in his early thirties, a drag artist at a sleazy gay club. He is not a transvestite and only dresses up as a woman when he is at work. Physically well-built resembling Sylvester Stallone.

Scenes

Prologue

- Scene 1: REIKO's Surgery —*REIKO meets MASA*
Scene 2: SANZO's Club —*MASA meets SANZO*
Scene 3: MASA's Flat —*MASA and SANZO*
Scene 4: MASA's Flat —*The Three Reunites*
Scene 5: REIKO's Surgery —*MASA's Second Appointment*
Scene 6: MASA's Flat —*MASA's Transformation*
Scene 7: REIKO's Surgery —*REIKO and SANZO Are Worried*
Scene 8: MASA's Hospital Room —*His Majesty and SANZO*
Scene 9: REIKO's Surgery —*SANZO Learns About the Emperor*
Scene 10: MASA's Hospital Room —*Why SANZO Became a Eunuch*
Scene 11: MASA's Hospital Room —*REIKO meets His Majesty*
Scene 12: REIKO's Surgery —*Rumours about REIKO*
Scene 13: MASA's Hospital Room —*MASA and His Majesty*
Scene 14: REIKO's Surgery —*Disappearance of His Majesty*

INTERVAL

- Scene 15: The Roof of the Hospital
—*The Three Reunites on the Roof*
Scene 16: REIKO's Surgery —*REIKO and SANZO*
Scene 17: MASA's Hospital Room
—*His Majesty proposes Marriage*
Scene 18: MASA's Hospital Room —*MASA's Awakening*
Scene 19: MASA's Hospital Room
—*SANZO denies REIKO's Version of the Truth*
Scene 20: MASA's Hospital Room
—*REIKO's Version of the Truth*
Scene 21: REIKO's Hospital Room —*MASA's Version of the Truth*
Scene 22: Another Room in the Hospital
—*MASA's Version of the Truth*
Scene 23: SANZO's Hospital Room —*SANZO's Version of the Truth*
Scene 24: Another Room in the Hospital
—*REIKO's Version of the Truth*
Scene 25: School Roof —*Last Day at School*
Scene 26: Another Room in the Hospital —*Truth or Delusion?*
Epilogue

Prologue

Three characters (MASA, REIKO, SANZO) appear from the auditorium and walk toward the stage. They look around the space where the story is about to unfold and come up onto the stage. A doctor's white coat is placed on stage. They all reach out for the doctor's coat and grab it simultaneously. They lift up the coat together, hence the coat will be situated at the centre of the three characters. MASA and REIKO let go of the coat, so it is SANZO who gets the coat. When SANZO is about to put on the coat, he thinks twice and hands it to REIKO. All this is done calmly but with all seriousness. The decision as to who will start telling his/her story or whose version of the story will be told first is determined carefully and under an unspoken determination between the three. They look at each other and exchange a meaningful smile. REIKO puts on the doctor's coat. The other two sit upstage and watch her. Lights darken on rest of the stage and focus on REIKO.

REIKO: It's only by chance that I get to speak first, though some people might call it fate. There's an old saying, "There's no such thing as the truth, only interpretations". How can I begin to tell you our story? ...Well perhaps, should I start from the moment we saw each other again after so many years?

MASA and SANZO, almost in unison, call out from the dark.

MASA: Please go ahead.

SANZO: Get on with it.

REIKO: I suppose this would be the quickest way for you to understand the truth, I mean of course, the truth as I see it. I am capable of analysing the difference between sanity and insanity. But I'm afraid it's difficult to distinguish between the truth and a delusion.

Again almost together.

MASA: If it's too difficult...

SANZO: I could tell mine.

REIKO: No! It... *(Collecting her thoughts)* It was a bitterly cold day, an afternoon in August, when summer seemed to have gone mad. Masa came to see me.

Scene 1 : REIKO's Surgery —REIKO meets MASA

REIKO starts acting out the role of a doctor. (We will later find out that she is acting out the role of the "doctor" according to her interpretation of the events) MASA enters the surgery of a hospital where REIKO works. He seems nervous. SANZO watches from behind.

REIKO: Next please. *(Notices that it's MASA)* My God Masa... it's you! What are you doing here?

MASA: It's been a long time.

REIKO: Long time! How are you? How long has it been? Not since school it must be...

MASA: So many years.

REIKO: So many, and too many. How did you find me here? What brings you here? You're right it's time we all got together. Was it Sanzo's idea?

MASA: Reiko, listen...

REIKO: So, when shall we get together? I can't do Saturday, but from next week I'm flexible. Could you fit in with my schedule? You wouldn't mind?

MASA: Reiko...

REIKO: *(Looking)* No! Next weekend's not good. I have to go to a friend's wedding. What about the week after, would that do? Let's pencil it in then!

MASA: Reiko, for god's sake, listen! Please...

REIKO: *(Sulks but tries to make her point again)*... But I can't do those weekends.

MASA: I'm not here to talk about some kind of reunion.

REIKO: Oh, I see. You phoned my mother, to find out where I work. Oh my God, she sent you to spy on me; to pry into my life, especially my love life. She did, didn't she? *(MASA tries to speak but REIKO stops him with her hand)* You don't have to, I'll tell you everything, anything as long as you promise not to tell her!

MASA: Reiko, what do you actually do here?

REIKO: I listen to people's problems.

MASA: Then, will you listen to mine?

REIKO looks.

MASA: I believe I'm one of your patients.

REIKO: You should have said.

MASA: I tried!

REIKO: (*Adopts a professional manner*) So, what seems to be the problem?

MASA: Well, it's difficult to explain... (*REIKO looks encouragingly*) I think there's something wrong with me.

REIKO: In what way?

MASA: I feel as if I'm not myself. Even now, as we talk, I don't know if it's really me talking or if it's someone else. I feel like... like an actor in a play or a film playing the part of a patient.

REIKO: I see.

MASA: I think you call it 'depersonalisation'?

REIKO: Very good.

MASA: I have been reading some books.

REIKO: So, what other symptoms do you have?

MASA: This may seem silly to you but sometimes I don't know whether I'm alive or dead. It's as if I've stopped caring about reality. And...now promise not to laugh.

REIKO: Of course.

MASA: I read the papers and let's say I read an obituary. Then suddenly, it hits me all the tragedies these newspapers bring us every morning. As soon as I have that feeling, I'm lost. With each article, more tears flow down my cheeks, impossible to control. I start to blame myself for every death, every disaster. I used to be able to read them without emotion and that thought makes my suffering unendurable.

REIKO: When did this start happening?

MASA: Six months ago, more or less.... Do you think I'm going insane?

REIKO: Of course not. You should have read to the end of the chapter. There's always a cure for people who are aware of their conditions. It only becomes a problem when you are no longer conscious of your symptoms.

MASA: Sometimes, I'm not aware.

REIKO: Are you sure?

MASA: Those moments during which I'm not aware of what I'm doing seem to get longer by the day. It used to be only for a few minutes. Then it was ten, then twenty. These days, more than an hour can go by without my knowing... also...

REIKO: Also?

MASA: I seem to be doing things during those moments. Things like...I find odd scribbles on a sheet of paper which I can't recall writing down.

REIKO: I see. Masa, what's your profession?

MASA: I'm a writer.

REIKO: That's brilliant.

MASA: It's not. Freelance stuff - I'm sure you've read the kind of thing. Those articles in magazines about the latest gadget or the hottest bar. The kind of crap people glance through and forget the moment they've read it.

REIKO: But you're still a writer.

MASA: My articles might as well be advertisements. I tell lies, even when I think some gadget is a total waste of money, I write stuff like "Can you survive this summer without...whatever it is". Sometimes, my hands tremble with disgust at the gap between what I really think and what I write.

REIKO: Why do you do it then?

MASA: So that I can become a real writer one day, of course.

REIKO: And why do you want to become a real writer?

MASA: Because... because...

MASA becomes visibly upset.

REIKO: *(Noticing MASA's reaction)* What's the matter?

MASA: Nothing. I was about to say... *(He can hardly get the words out)* So as I was saying... *(His pain becomes unbearable)*

REIKO: You don't have to tell me if you don't want to.
Things will be okay. We'll leave it there for now.

MASA: Oh?

REIKO: Let's not rush into things. I'll prescribe you an anti-depressant.

MASA: Umm...

REIKO: Don't worry, it's a mild one, very few side effects.
Take two a day, after food.

MASA: ...Thanks.

REIKO: It might make you a bit drowsy. In which case, it's better to take a nap and try not to think about work.

Just as REIKO starts to fill the prescription form, MASA interrupts.

MASA: Do you ever feel like going somewhere, but you're not quite sure where you want to go?

REIKO: What do you mean?

MASA: Or you know you've forgotten something but you can't remember exactly what it is that you've forgotten.
Or you know you have a strong feeling for someone but you don't remember who that is. Don't you ever feel that way?

REIKO: ...Does that have something to do with the reason you wanted to become a writer?

MASA: When I was not conscious, my other self left a scribble.

REIKO: What did it say?

MASA: ..."I am a stranger to myself."

Lights dim and only focus on REIKO. MASA retreats back to the seat upstage.

REIKO: That was how we met again after so many years. I said I'd see him once a week. De-personalization is considered the first stage of schizophrenia. One loses touch with oneself and the other persona starts existing in a different world. The patient, he or she, may wear the mask of everyday life - student - businessman - but the slightest thing, and the mask shatters, and what is left is the delusion. I thought Masa could be on the verge of developing full blown schizophrenia. I have decided to deal with him with the utmost care.

Lights on REIKO disappears.

Scene 2 : SANZO's Club —MASA meets SANZO

SANZO: Have you ever spent sleepless nights haunted by a rumour you've heard about yourself? Desperately, you ask around, trying to find out who started it. When you do finally track them down, they swear they never said anything of the kind. So then all that's left is the rumour and no trace of the person who started it. That's when you begin to believe, that there may be some truth in it after all. The way Reiko tells it, I appear in their lives a few days later.

Lights come up. MASA is holding a bill in his hand (or miming as if he is)

MASA: One hundred pounds! Two beers and a packet of crisps! You must be joking!

MASA mimes as if he is being threatened. He is grabbed by the chest..

MASA: Get your hands off me! Ouch! Please! Stop!

MASA is beaten and has his wallet taken from him.

MASA: Hey! Stop! Give it back!

SANZO witnesses the situation. SANZO appears to want to interfere but is scared of the person beating MASA and can't move. MASA is hit again and thrown out into the street.

MASA: (Moans) Give - me - back - my wallet!

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

SANZO looks around, approaches MASA and tries to dust his clothes. MASA groans in pain.

MASA: Hey! What the hell! Now you want to steal my clothes!

SANZO without saying a word takes MASA by his hand and helps him up. While dusting MASA's clothes, SANZO speaks.

SANZO: You shouldn't have come to a joint like this without checking it out first. Let's go.

MASA: First the robbery! Now the lecture! I'm calling the police. They'll soon sort this out!

SANZO: Don't be stupid. You've no evidence, you can't prove a thing. You'd be wasting your time. Can you walk?

MASA: Leave me alone!

SANZO: Let me take you home, Masa.

MASA is startled.

SANZO: Wait here. I'll go and get a taxi.

MASA: How do you know my name?

SANZO: We went to school together.

SANZO turns to let MASA take a good look at his face.

MASA: Sanzo! ...It's you, Sanzo! It's Sanzo. My god, What are you doing here!?

SANZO: Trying to call a taxi.

MASA: No...You were in that club?

SANZO: Part of the floor show you might say.

MASA: You were working in there?

SANZO: When I opened the bottles with my teeth you clapped...

MASA: Were you the one pulling the crowd?

SANZO: When I danced the tango with a goldfish in my teeth and then ate it, you gave me a big tip. Now do you remember?

MASA: So, what were you doing in a place like that?

SANZO: I'm an artist, darling.

Pause. MASA and SANZO stare at each other.

SANZO: Ah, here's a taxi!

SANZO waves at a taxi wiggling his bottom. He is being sweetly camp. Lights dim and focus only on SANZO.

SANZO: And so, I took him back to his flat.

Scene 3 : MASA's Flat —MASA and SANZO

MASA's flat.

MASA: So, what's going on!?

SANZO: I told you, the table charge was 50, beers were 15 per bottle, so two bottles makes 30...

MASA: No, not that! I mean, why are you working in a place like that!?

SANZO hands back MASA his wallet.

SANZO: Here. I snatched your wallet back.

MASA: You...

SANZO: The place is run by those thugs. Your credit cards would have been swiped and you would have ended up in big trouble. *(Looking around the room)* Wow! What a collection! Do you shoplift anything else or is it just the books?

MASA: Don't change the subject! *(Studying him)* Are you gay? You weren't gay at school.

SANZO: Aren't you being the tiniest bit too personal, darling? *(Looking at the bookshelf)* So many books on the history of Japan?

MASA: I'm doing research for an article.

SANZO: So you did become a writer.

MASA: Freelance.

SANZO: Magazines?

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

MASA: You sound as if you know the business. Yes, those columns without a by-line.

SANZO: So you made it, Masa. Remember that day...

MASA: Which day?

SANZO: On that last day, when we three met up on the school roof, and we talked about our dreams. Do you remember what I said I wanted to be?

MASA: A writer, wasn't it?

SANZO: You do remember. Oh bless you, I'm touched.

He makes as if to plant a kiss on him.

MASA: Hey!

SANZO: Don't be so coy. You didn't seem to mind when I was Sylvia Stallone, Queen Rambo.

MASA: Sylvia?

SANZO: Yes darling?

MASA: You can't be serious?

SANZO: When did you become so cynical?

MASA: When did you become Sylvia?

SANZO: Let's not rush things. I'll tell you later when we go to bed. *(Winks)*

MASA: What?

SANZO: *(Looks around)* I see, you've only got one bed?

MASA freezes.

MASA: You're staying the night?

SANZO: Of course, what do you think? I sneaked out while I'm supposed to be working. I stole back your wallet. They'll be looking for me to beat me to a pulp.

MASA: Where do you live?

SANZO: Over the club.

MASA: Oh.

SANZO: It's fine. I never had much there anyway... some undies, my Versace bag. I'll slip back in one day and get them. Come and sit down.

MASA: ...Oh! I forgot, there's this film I have to review. Sorry, Sanzo. It's one of those arty films, which I'm sure you won't like. *(Mimes looking at the clock)* If I go now, I could just make the nine o'clock showing. I'll miss a bit, but it won't matter, nothing much happens in French films. You're welcome to stay but I do have to go, sorry.

SANZO: Masa, sit down.

MASA: I really must go. Make yourself at home.

SANZO: *(In a threatening voice)* Sit.

MASA: Yes.

MASA has no choice but obey the order and sits down.

SANZO: Do you know a tragic thing about being gay?

MASA: Nope.

SANZO: It's when you come out to a male friend and they immediately put up their guard. It's like a guy who hears a woman saying "I'm in love with someone" and immediately assumes she's talking about him.

MASA: Is that so.

SANZO: The type who thinks all the women who come for his advice are after him. What do you think of guys like that?

MASA: Self-obsessed.

SANZO: Exactly. When all she's done is come for advice about his best friend or colleague. What would you call that kind of guy?

MASA: Narcissistic bastard.

SANZO: Precisely. And what if the guy hears the woman saying, "I'm in love with someone" and immediately gets an erection?

MASA: Good man.

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

SANZO: A miserable prick. Now, do you see how stupid it is to be on guard, just because a friend confides in you that he's gay.

MASA: Yes, teach. It's been a revelation!

SANZO: Good. Now - I'm thirsty.

MASA: What would Sir like to drink?

MASA mimes of opening a fridge.

SANZO: But then of course, there are other times when you long for the warmth of human contact.

MASA: (Nervous) Sorry?

SANZO: You know you'll regret it in the morning but you long so much for that human touch. And that is...

MASA: Yes?

SANZO: Only human.

SANZO looks into MASA's eyes.

SANZO: Meow.

MASA: (In haste) Stop it, Sanzo! You know you're stronger than me.

SANZO: It's all right. I work out but you don't have to be scared.

MASA: Don't come near me! If you come any closer, I swear I'll kill myself!...

Just when SANZO is about to leap onto MASA, the doorbell rings.

MASA: Coming!

MASA runs to the door in a flash.

Scene 4 : MASA's Flat —The Three Reunite

MASA opens the door and finds REIKO.

REIKO: Ah, I'm glad you're in. Sorry to come by so late but I couldn't get away earlier.

MASA: What's wrong, Reiko? I mean Doctor.

REIKO: You know you can call me Reiko. I came to ask you the same question. You didn't show up for your appointment yesterday. I was starting to worry.

MASA: Oh, I'm sorry. It was because... well...

REIKO: You will turn up next week, won't you? Or do you want me to squeeze you in this week?

MASA: Umm...Why don't you come in for a minute, Reiko?

REIKO: OK, but I just came by to see if you were all right.

MASA: Come. Come in.

REIKO: But I can't stay long...Oh, I didn't realise you had a visitor.

REIKO was about to say hello to SANZO and freezes. Same response from SANZO. Then REIKO and SANZO react at the same time.

REIKO/SANZO: Ah~~!

REIKO and SANZO ask MASA at the same time.

REIKO/SANZO: But why, why didn't you tell me, why!?

MASA: Well, it's kind of complicated...

REIKO: (To SANZO) I can't believe it!

SANZO: (To REIKO) I can't believe it either!

REIKO: Is it really you?

SANZO: Can this be true?

REIKO: How are you?

SANZO: I'm fine. You?

REIKO: Fine. I can't believe it.

SANZO: Unbelievable. After so many years.

REIKO: (To MASA) Why didn't you tell me!

SANZO: (To MASA) You sneaky little tart!

MASA: As I was saying, it's kind of...

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

SANZO: Reiko, you haven't changed a bit, as gorgeous as ever.

REIKO: Sanzo, you too, you're as er... as ever.

REIKO/SANZO: Unbelievable.

SANZO: So, Reiko, what are you up to these days?

REIKO: I'm a psychiatrist.

SANZO: Wow! You became a doctor!

REIKO: And you, Sanzo?

SANZO: Me? A drag artist.

REIKO: Wow! You became a ...a

SANZO: A queen.

REIKO/SANZO: Reiko! / Sanzo!

They laugh with excitement and embrace.

REIKO: You must have gone through so much.

SANZO: And you too.

REIKO: It's a long story. Masa, do you have any beer?

MASA: Sorry?

REIKO: This calls for a drink!

SANZO: I'd prefer some dry wine, if you have any.

REIKO: Let's drink the place dry!

SANZO: Yes!

SANZO, REIKO and MASA start drinking celebrating their reunion. They mime drinking together. Lights, music and actions suggest that this goes on for a few hours.

MASA: It looks as if we've run out of beer. *(Mimes to look at the clock)* There might just be time before closing. I'll go get some more.

MASA takes a few steps back and watches SANZO and REIKO during the following conversation. SANZO and REIKO exchange a smile.

SANZO: Reiko, I'm surprised. I never knew you two were

still seeing each other.

REIKO: What? *(Laughs a little)* No, no, he's just...It's not like that.

SANZO: I see, Masa is one of your patients. Is he?

REIKO: I couldn't possibly say.

SANZO: So, after you two went on to university...

REIKO: We went our separate ways...

SANZO: So my noble gesture was fruitless?

REIKO: What noble gesture?

SANZO: I always prayed that you two would end up living happily ever after.

REIKO: Thanks. But, to tell you the truth, we were just kids, I don't think it was love.

SANZO: Wow. What a thing to say.

REIKO: I didn't realise it then but I know now.

SANZO: If it wasn't love, what was it then?

REIKO: I don't know.

SANZO: Lust?

REIKO stares at SANZO.

SANZO: What's that look?

REIKO: I'm just impressed.

SANZO: Impressed?

REIKO: We were both so shy. You could barely string two words together - but now!

SANZO: Yes I've been through a lot, but I'm sure you've been through just as much as a single woman.

REIKO: Not as much as you have Sanzo.

SANZO: We single women should stick together. *(Reiko laughs)* It's a long story.

REIKO: Same here.

SANZO and REIKO exchange a smile again. After a moment of silence...

SANZO: When I was at school, I had no friends but I didn't think twice about it. I just thought that was - being a teenager and the years would pass like that.

REIKO: When people spoke to me I nodded, I smiled or laughed, from a distance it looked like conversation, conversation without communication. They were empty days; but in a way they were happy. I thought that was how life was and to expect more was crying for the moon.

SANZO: I've always been unsettled. I was unsettled then all the time. Why? A teacher's cruel remark, casual, off-hand. My parent's constant complaints - the sheer stupidity of the school rules.

REIKO: Perhaps it was those girls who completely changed their tune depending on who they were with. The ones who did nothing but spread rumours. Or maybe it was just me and the mask I could somehow never take off.

SANZO: That new headmaster was unbelievably strict. Instead of his usual lecture about how wearing uniforms sloppily leads us to delinquency, he launches into this speech about cigarette butts on the school roof. How there had been so many when he arrived and yet, thanks to his tightening up of the rules, he could not find any there now. On and on he droned about society needing such rules.

REIKO: That evening, I secretly collected my father's cigarette butts from the ashtray.

SANZO: I went to beg butts from the nearby pub.

REIKO: The following morning, I ran up onto the rooftop.

SANZO: And there,

REIKO/SANZO: There you were.

Lights focus onto MASA who has been watching them from behind. SANZO and REIKO look at him.

REIKO: We all had the same idea!

SANZO: We weren't in the same class, we'd hardly ever spoken to each other. But there we all stood..

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

MASA: Astounded! With handfuls of cigarette butts staring at each other.

REIKO: It was a cloudy day...

SANZO: With a light breeze that seemed to have blown us up onto the roof -

REIKO: together...

MASA: And so, that was

SANZO: the beginning of

REIKO: our friendship.

MASA cries out all of a sudden.

MASA: Beer! Enough to last till morning.

REIKO: I won't be able to stay that long. I have a meeting first thing.

MASA: Don't think about it now. Make yourself at home.

SANZO: So, what's wrong with Masa?

Pause.

REIKO: Nothing.

MASA: I have this thing called 'depersonalisation'.

SANZO looks blank.

SANZO: Have you become a communist?

MASA: Huh?

SANZO: You want to de-personalise things, right?

MASA: No, it's a medical term.

SANZO: Which means?

MASA: Even now, as I talk to you, part of me is looking down on me watching me speak.

SANZO looks around.

SANZO: Where?

MASA points at the back of his head.

MASA: Here.

SANZO: Oh that, if that's what you mean, then I have the same thing.

MASA/REIKO: What?

SANZO: Doesn't everybody? Reiko?

REIKO: What do you mean?

SANZO: What do you mean what do I mean? Reiko, I'm sure you've felt the same. Like there's always another person inside you. Even when you're screwing someone you love, isn't there a little part of you that is thinking about another man?

REIKO: You must be joking!

SANZO: Oh, not intellectual enough for you?

REIKO: What do you mean by that?

SANZO: I mean you shouldn't try to intellectualise everything. You mustn't use your brain all the time, start getting in touch with your body.

REIKO: Sanzo, you should use your brain more and your muscles less!

SANZO: Three cheers for Little Miss Two Brains! Two brains and a cast iron c...

MASA: Keep your voice down or I'll have complaints from the neighbours.

SANZO: Cunt!

REIKO: Sanzo, you're drunk.

SANZO: Not yet! I'm just so happy to see you both. It's been so long since that last day on the school roof.

REIKO: Yes, it has, hasn't it?

SANZO: Do you still think this isn't happening?

MASA: Well no, but...

REIKO: So, why didn't you show up for your appointment yesterday?

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

MASA: Umm...

SANZO: How long have you been seeing her?

REIKO: He only came to see me once. Yesterday was supposed to be the second time.

SANZO: Why didn't you show?

MASA: I know I left the flat...

REIKO/SANZO: And?

MASA: Well, I remember up until the point I left the flat. I went down the steps, and then...when I regained consciousness, I was back here again.

SANZO: What?

MASA: And it was already dark.

Pause.

REIKO: How long do you think it had been?

MASA: About five hours.

REIKO: Right. Tomorrow, I'll find a slot so you could come see me at the hospital. Let's talk about it then.

MASA: Maybe. I'll try.

REIKO: What can we do? I'd like to come and collect you but I have other appointments...

SANZO: I'll take him to the hospital.

REIKO: Thanks, Sanzo. That's okay for tomorrow but what about the future.

SANZO: I'll take him there every time. Leave it to me.

REIKO: But...

SANZO: You see. I'm moving in.

REIKO: What?

REIKO takes a good look at SANZO and MASA.

MASA: *(Reading into REIKO's expression)* No! No! You've got the wrong idea.

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

SANZO: I'm blushing.

MASA: You're blushing! There's a time and place for your jokes Sanzo!

SANZO: Masa is a bit shy. It's kind of difficult for him to be honest about these things. *(Winks)*

REIKO: *(Laughs weakly)* I guess I better be going.

REIKO starts to move.

MASA: No wait! Please wait! Please!

MASA approaches REIKO and comes to her side.

MASA: I'll see you to the bus stop.

REIKO: It's all right. I'm used to walking on my own at this hour. I'm not a child, don't worry.

SANZO takes hold of MASA's hand and pulls MASA back towards him. MASA is easily lifted towards SANZO.

SANZO: Of course, we're no longer in our teens. We are mature women, aren't we?

REIKO: Th... That's right.

SANZO gives a half nelson on MASA. MASA cries out towards REIKO who is about to leave.

MASA: Wait! Please wait! Pleaaase!

REIKO: *(To SANZO)* ...He's crying.

SANZO: Tears of joy sweetie.

REIKO: Right, then. Tomorrow. Please be sure he gets to the hospital.

REIKO exits.

MASA: Reiko, wait!

SANZO lets go of MASA.

SANZO: Let's go to bed.

MASA gives SANZO an alarmed look.

SANZO: *(Laughing a little)* It was a joke. You haven't changed, have you? You were always so serious. I'll sleep on the floor here. Do you have a spare blanket?

MASA: Yes, yes of course.

SANZO: Sweet dreams, honey.

MASA: Good night.

MASA mimes turning out the lights. Silence in complete darkness.

SANZO (Voice): ...How about giving it a go, just this once?

MASA (Voice): No!

Lights come on, revealing MASA in a strange Karate-like pose.

SANZO: (Smiling) Still feeling totally unreal are we dear?

MASA: It's totally surreal.

Black Out.

Scene 5:REIKO's Surgery —MASA's Second Appointment

When lights come up, it is REIKO's surgery. REIKO is listening to MASA.

REIKO: Did you sleep well?

MASA: No. It's been the longest night I've ever spent.

REIKO: Why? What happened?

MASA: Nothing happened. That's why the night seemed so long.

REIKO: What do you mean?

MASA: Nothing happened, but a lot has happened.

REIKO: Would you care to elaborate a little? It's important for the patient to trust his doctor.

MASA: You're sure you're not just being nosey Reiko?

REIKO: Not at all. It's part of my job...Masa, you didn't!

MASA: No! No, you've got it wrong! I clung onto my duvet all night long, wondering what would happen if Sanzo came on to me, what would it be like? If people found out, it would be terrible but then I might not get another chance. Of course there'd be no love involved. And yet, love can be born from physical contact... Am

I actually curious? Curious and terrified at the same time! These thoughts were racing round my head. And with the light coming up, I suddenly think...wait a minute, could this be what women go through when they lose their virginity? The whole experience has given me much more respect for women.

REIKO smiles at MASA.

REIKO: Well I'm glad. And you seem to be feeling all right.

MASA: I didn't get much sleep but I had a big breakfast.

REIKO: Sanzo?

MASA: 'The Full English'.

REIKO: I see.

MASA: The problem is...

REIKO: Yes?

MASA: It was so good.

REIKO: That's nice.

MASA suddenly puts on a serious face.

MASA: Couldn't you start my treatment now?

REIKO: Talking like this is already a part of the treatment.

MASA: I feel fine today.

REIKO: Good. Just give yourself some time.

MASA: I actually know the cause of all this.

REIKO: Go on..

MASA: I know it's a bit embarrassing coming from someone my age, but the thing is... I don't really know what I want to do with my life. But my other self, I mean my true self must know. That's all there is to it.

REIKO: I see.

MASA: That's the cause of this depersonalisation. It's as simple as that.

REIKO: Simple?

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

MASA: All I need to do is to find out what I really want to do.

REIKO: I see.

MASA: Is that all you can say?

REIKO: I'm just admiring how clearly you've analysed yourself. It looks as if you don't need a doctor to help you.

MASA: I do. I want you to help me, Reiko. Help me find what I really want to do.

REIKO: That is something you have to do for yourself. Just give yourself time and I'm sure you'll be able to find your true vocation.

MASA: I'm getting a headache.

REIKO: *(Immediately)* Let's move on. What do you like doing in your spare time?

MASA: *(Ignoring the question)* Reiko, why did you become a psychiatrist?

Pause. We will find that the "doctor/patient" relationship will be reversed from this point.

REIKO: Are you asking me?

MASA: I was surprised to find you here because I don't recall you going on to medical school.

REIKO: Well, no...

MASA: The last thing I heard about you was that you left university and joined that cult...

A beat as if REIKO doesn't want to talk about it.

REIKO: When I went on to university, I was just bored. Professors did nothing but read from the books they had published. Others might have sought amusement in extra curricular activities, but I couldn't find any that interested me. I felt surrounded by people who seemed to think of nothing but sex.

MASA: You were always so serious, Reiko.

REIKO: The cult just filled up this vacancy, slipping in between the cracks.

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

MASA: I've heard of their approach before.

REIKO: I think it was around the beginning of my second year.
That must have been when we stopped calling each other.

MASA: Yes, that's right.

REIKO: I knew it was dodgy but they were so welcoming and I..I was exhausted mentally. Before I knew it, I was hooked.

MASA: I see.

REIKO: When they preached that sex was a sin, an act of evil, I felt a huge relief. I knew I belonged with them. I was with them for three years. I moved out of my flat, stopped going to university and traveled around the country preaching the message of our guru and selling 'the sacred items'.

MASA: And that made you happy.

REIKO: No, but I felt a strong sense of responsibility. I was in a fever, I honestly believed that if I didn't fulfil my quota, the world would come to an end.

MASA: ...So what made you leave them?

REIKO: It's hard to say. (Smiles) A psychiatrist without answers (shrugs) but I can say that after I left them, I felt completely empty. For six months, I couldn't even bring myself to leave the flat. I didn't even have the energy to kill myself.

MASA: How terrible.

REIKO: But then, one day, I just snapped out of it. I realised I was wasting my life. I had to fill the void. I decided to study again and go to medical school.

MASA: So, did you find it?

REIKO: What?

MASA: The meaning to your life?

REIKO: If it were that easy to find, I would be...(jokingly) a guru by now.

MASA and REIKO exchange a smile. The "doctor/patient" relationship reverses back to REIKO's interpretation.

MASA: Reiko, do you know much about the history of the Emperors in Japan?

REIKO: Emperors? No. If you remember, I always tried to skip history class. Why?

MASA: I've been reading up on it to write an article for a magazine and came upon this quote that 'to exist as the Emperor of Japan, a man should not have an identity of his own'.

REIKO: I don't understand.

MASA: It's difficult to explain but...I just thought a guru of your cult must have been someone who was a total contrast to an Emperor; perhaps too much ego and a strong identity of his own.

REIKO: ...

MASA: Reiko, are you seeing someone at the moment?

REIKO: I think I'm meant to ask the questions.

MASA: Are you?

REIKO: Well...in a way.

MASA: And are you happy?

REIKO: What kind of question is that? Come to that, are you seeing anyone?

MASA: Well...

REIKO: Sanzo?

MASA: *(Standing up to emphasise)* No!

REIKO: If you're not serious, it would be cruel to keep leading him on.

MASA: I'm not!

A knock at the door.

REIKO: Yes?

SANZO enters.

REIKO: Sanzo, what's wrong?

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

SANZO: ...I'm lonely.

REIKO/MASA: What?

SANZO: You two are just talking by yourselves. Sylvia feels left out.

MASA: *(Like a doctor)* It's all part of the treatment.

REIKO, SANZO and MASA react differently at this moment of transition.

REIKO: *(Reminding others of her role as the "doctor")* Yes. That's right. It's part of the treatment. I think that's it for this session.

MASA: Doctor! *(Giving REIKO a pleading look)*

REIKO: Please don't look at me like that.

SANZO: Let's go home, honey.

MASA: Doctor. Have you ever thought how a cow might feel if she were to be thrown into a river full of piranha?

REIKO: No.

SANZO: Don't worry. I'll protect you from the piranhas.

MASA: You're not reading my meaning.

REIKO: Look after yourself.

REIKO exits.

Scene 6 : MASA's Flat —MASA's Transformation

SANZO: So, what do you want to have for supper?

MASA: I don't really care.

SANZO: You should eat well, get plenty of rest. Just let me know what you fancy.

MASA: I really don't mind.

SANZO: I'll go to the shops anyway, so be a good boy and stay put.

MASA: I'm not a child.

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

SANZO: Everyone's entitled to be a child when they're not feeling well.

SANZO disappears. MASA is on his own. His face starts to slightly contort. Lights focus on MASA. Something warps and grates. After some time, SANZO returns.

SANZO: Honey, I'm home. Have you been a good boy?

MASA: ...

SANZO: We are going to have a roast for supper. Chicken a la Sylvia.

MASA is staring at SANZO.

SANZO: What? Stop staring at me like that. You're making me blush.

MASA speaks calmly and with dignity.

MASA: ...Who are you?

SANZO: What are you talking about? I'm not going to fall for that one.

MASA: Are you the person who looks after me?

SANZO: Well, you could say that, I guess. I'll take good care of you.

MASA: Have you come from China?

SANZO: What?

MASA: ...Are you a eunuch?

SANZO: A eunuch?

MASA: I must say, this place is rather small, extremely claustrophobic. However, rest assured, we'll be in a much better place soon.

MASA moves towards the door.

SANZO: Where are you going? We'll be having supper soon.

MASA: Good day.

SANZO stops MASA from leaving the place.

SANZO: Wait a minute. Have you gone mad?

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

MASA: How dare you touch me. Let go of my hand.

SANZO: At least you could tell me where you're going.

MASA: Back to my place.

SANZO: What are you talking about?

MASA: The Imperial Palace, of course.

SANZO: ...What?

MASA: The Imperial Palace is where I belong.

SANZO: Masa, you...

MASA: My name is not Masa. I am The Emperor Tachihara, the 118th descendant of the first Mikado - The Emperor Jimmu, and the true ruler of the Southern Court.

SANZO slowly releases his hand from MASA.

SANZO: What?

MASA: I was cheated of the throne by my useless brother who, as you can see, has ruined this country.

SANZO stares at MASA.

SANZO: Your Majesty. *(Bows deeply but comes up quickly)*
Actually I don't have time for this.

MASA: Well, good day.

MASA is about to leave.

SANZO: Emperor Tachihara, may I ask what you intend to do once you get to the Imperial Palace?

MASA: I will ask the Northern Court to leave the Palace at once. A person of an illegitimate line has no right to the throne or the Palace.

SANZO: I see. Do you know where the Imperial Palace is?

MASA: I went to reconnoitre the place the day before yesterday. It was quite easy to find. I will take my leave of you.

SANZO: Wait a moment, please. I understand. Let me call you a taxi and take you there.

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

MASA: That would suit me well. Tell me, I believe it's quite unusual for eunuchs to look after the Emperor rather than the Empress.

SANZO: Oh? Oh, yes. It's unique, but I am rather a unique eunuch.

MASA: I see. So, do take care of calling the taxi, will you?

SANZO: How about having some chicken first...

MASA tries to leave the room.

SANZO: Yes, yes. Let's go. Uh, before we go, Emperor Tachihara.

MASA: You may call me Your Majesty.

SANZO: Your Majesty, would you mind if we stopped by the hospital on our way? I'm suddenly not feeling well and urgently need to see a doctor.

MASA: Must it be now?

SANZO: Yes, immediately!

MASA: Very well. Let us go.

MASA and SANZO leave. Black Out. We could hear voices in the dark.

SANZO (Voice): Reiko! Reiko!

MASA (Voice): What are you doing!? Take your hands off me! I am the Emperor! How dare you! Eunuch! Your position is to help me! Let go of me at once!

Scene7:REIKO's Surgery—REIKO and SANZO Are Worried

Lights come up. REIKO and SANZO are at the surgery. SANZO is confused.

REIKO: *(With a faint smile)* Don't worry yourself too much. I'm sure things will be all right.

SANZO: ...Do you really think he's gone mad?

REIKO: People with this condition often claim to have blue blood.

SANZO: Does he have schizophrenia?

Pause.

REIKO: We'll keep him here at the hospital for a while and see how things go.

SANZO: Could I look after him?

REIKO: I'm afraid not. You'll have to leave it to the doctors and nurses and come and see him during visiting hours.

SANZO: I'll become a nurse. I'm willing to study hard.

REIKO: It takes years to...

SANZO: Please, Reiko. Please make an exception and let me look after him.

REIKO: Are you serious about Masa?

SANZO: Listen, my best friend's turning into an Emperor. Please let me stay. How about as a trainee?

REIKO: But...

SANZO: Okay, then I'll get myself admitted to the hospital. Hey you, I am Marie Antoinette. I'm mad as a hatter! Let them eat cake and if they can't find that, Mars Bars.

REIKO: Okay I get the picture. I'll see what I can do.

SANZO: Thank you, Reiko. I promise I'll take you to this brilliant gay bar that I know.

SANZO is about to leave.

SANZO: *(Suddenly remembering)* Reiko, what exactly is a eunuch?

REIKO: They are castrated men who used to serve the Imperial family.

SANZO: You mean servants without balls! I knew you were clever! Hey, I know a guy without balls. I'll introduce you.

SANZO leaves with an air of happiness.

REIKO: Thanks, that's the last thing I need!
(To the audience)
And then, Masa fell into a coma for two whole days.

Black Out.

Scene 8: MASA's Hospital Room—His Majesty and SANZO

Lights come up quickly. MASA is lying on a bed. SANZO is by his side. MASA groans and regains his consciousness.

SANZO: You're awake.

MASA: ...Where am I?

SANZO: You're in a hospital.

MASA moves his upper body. He feels pain in his head.

SANZO: Are you all right? Take it easy.

MASA tries to get out of bed.

SANZO: Don't try to move. You need to rest.

MASA: I must go to the Palace.

SANZO is petrified.

SANZO: Well, um ...Your Majesty, the...the police have surrounded the Palace. We'd be arrested if we go there now.

MASA: ...The police?

SANZO: Yes. It's quite impossible to enter the Palace at the moment.

MASA: ...How cowardly those Northern impostors are!

SANZO: I think it's wisest to rest here for a while.

MASA: You could be in league with the Northern Court.

SANZO: Why do you say that?

MASA: After all it was you who brought me here.

SANZO: Pardon me for not informing Your Majesty earlier. When you told me of your desire to return to the Palace, I had already been told about the police. But as I knew you should not be crossed at that moment, I reluctantly decided to take the liberty of bringing you here.

MASA: I see. So, a person from China, what is your name?

SANZO: Your Majesty, I am not from China. I'm from whatever..

MASA: (*Regally*) I see. A eunuch from the whatever... how interesting. And what is your name?

SANZO: My name is Sylvia.

MASA: A name most appropriate for a eunuch, I suppose. Sylvia, we are facing a crisis. If things remain as they are, the country will continue to worship a false Emperor.

SANZO: Your Majesty?

MASA: What is it?

SANZO: Under the circumstances, may I suggest that you bear the unbearable, suffer the insufferable, and renounce the throne.

MASA: ...Sylvia. Do you have any respect for the Emperor?

SANZO: Oh Yes. Words cannot express...

MASA: And why do you respect him?

SANZO: Why? Why...I don't know.

MASA: Do you respect him for no reason?

SANZO: No, It's coming back to me ...because ... because the monarchy is the representative of the people according to the Constitution.

MASA: Why do people consider him to be their representative?

SANZO: Because he has power?

MASA: And why does he have power?

SANZO: Because...I'm not too sure.

MASA: So, you allow someone to represent you not knowing why.

SANZO: No, I mean...Oh, yes, of course...Because they have always protected the country throughout history.

MASA: That's right. If the Emperor is from the Southern Court, that could be said. But this does not apply to the Northern Court. The North betrayed the true line of Emperor Gokameyama and, with the help of the traitor Ashikaga Shogun, stole the three Imperial relics that symbolise the right to reign; the sword, the jewels and the mirror.

SANZO: I see.

MASA: Now do you understand that it is the North that must renounce the throne, Sylvia?

SANZO: Eh...I think so.

MASA: I shall rest a while. I am tired. You get on and devise a plan to achieve our purpose, while I sleep.

SANZO: Yes, Your Majesty. Please take a good long rest.

MASA slowly closes his eyes. The bed disappears.

Scene 9 : REIKO's Surgery

—SANZO Learns About the Emperor

REIKO enters.

SANZO: Isn't there a quick cure for this?

REIKO: We have to be patient. We don't actually know what triggers these episodes.

SANZO: I thought medical science had made a lot of progress.

REIKO: Still there are so many things we just don't know.

SANZO: Reiko, how can you be so calm?

REIKO: Sanzo, do you know how to stop students from cheating in an exam?

SANZO: Huh?

REIKO: Have the supervisor sit at the back of the classroom rather than at the front. That way, students will think they are being watched all the time.

SANZO: Huh?

REIKO: The strongest restraint is the rules we set in our own minds.

SANZO: Is that how it works?

REIKO: Believe me, that's how the mind works.

SANZO: So what are you going to do about him!?

REIKO: We just have to be very patient and deal with whatever problem arises.

REIKO hands SANZO a book.

REIKO: You can start by reading this book.

SANZO: What is it about?

REIKO: I think I saw the same book in Masa's flat. "The Emperor of Japan — A Man without Identity". It also explains about the Northern and the Southern Courts.

SANZO: You mean that stuff he says is true?

REIKO: The important thing is not to deny any of the patient's delusions. Just listen to them carefully. Do you think you could do that?

SANZO: Yes, of course.

REIKO: (*Opening the book*) I think this section may be relevant to what you were telling me.
<Because an Emperor tries not to have an identity of his own, people are able to project their own ideals and wishes as to who he is. The identity of an Emperor is not having an identity. This attempt which seems impossible and contradictory to any human being is the very essence of being an Emperor.>

SANZO: Interesting.

REIKO: Now don't forget, as soon as he regains consciousness, I'd like to know. I would also like to have an audience with His Majesty, all right?

SANZO: Yes...Reiko?

REIKO: What is it?

SANZO: You've become so strong.

REIKO: Rubbish. This is my job.

SANZO: I promise I'll take you to this fabulous gay bar run by the gorgeous man whose completely without balls.

REIKO: Thanks.

REIKO exits.

Scene 10 : MASA's Hospital Room
—Why SANZO Became a Eunuch

The bed appears. A room in the hospital. MASA is sleeping. SANZO sits by the bed and starts reading. MASA groans which startles SANZO. MASA regains conscious.

SANZO: Are you awake? Your Majesty?

MASA: Well Sylvia, what's the plan?

SANZO: Er...I haven't quite thought of it yet. If only there was concrete evidence to persuade the police. Would you be able to come up with any proof of who you are? Any ID?

MASA: The only proof that you're an Emperor are the three holy relics.

SANZO: Should we try to make replicas of them?

MASA: ...I must say I find your sense of humour rather amusing.

SANZO: Thank you.

MASA: If you can't come up with a plan...perhaps all that is needed is for me to show myself to my people.

MASA tries to move.

SANZO: No, Your Majesty, first I need to study! Please give me some more time to do the research.

MASA: What research?

SANZO: When Your Majesty presents himself at the Imperial Palace, there'll be a Media frenzy. And I'll look mad, ridiculous if I can't explain your claim to the throne properly, I mean the whole monarchy thing, or the...

MASA: You may speak your mind.

SANZO: Thank you. Anyway, I am reading this book. They will probably ask me "What do you think of the Southern Court?". I can't just pretend or say "Southern Court,

Southern Comfort, Whatever?" What would the media and the police think of us? If they thought I was mad, they might think Your Majesty is mad too. Then I wouldn't be able to forgive myself, you see. I know I'd blame myself for the rest of my life, thinking if only I had studied more...

MASA: All right. I understand. Do calm down.

SANZO: Thank you, Your Majesty. Please be patient until I finish reading.

Pause. SANZO casually pushes the buzzer by the head of the bed.

MASA: Sylvia, why did you become a eunuch? Was it because you wanted to climb the social ladder, I hear that's often the case for people of your sort.

SANZO: No.

MASA: Were you captured?

SANZO: No....Your Majesty, I wanted to become a writer.

MASA: A writer...?

SANZO: But I couldn't think of anything to write about. I didn't have anything to say.

MASA: And so, in despair, you become a eunuch.

SANZO: No, Your Majesty. I knew that I had nothing to write about because my life was empty.

MASA: So, in despair, you became a eunuch.

SANZO: No, Your Majesty. I have experimented with many things. But nothing gave me the fulfilment I was looking for.

MASA: And so, in despair...

SANZO: No, Your Majesty. I wanted to change myself. So I set out on the biggest adventure of my life towards the inevitable path.

MASA: An adventure towards the inevitable path?

SANZO: Yes. And that was how I have finally found my true self.

MASA: Your true self...And how does that make you feel?

SANZO: Better.

Pause.

SANZO: Your Majesty, would you like a massage?

MASA: Yes, I should like that.
I sometimes wonder how life would have been if I had
not been born an Emperor but a commoner like you.

SANZO: Yes?

MASA: I toy with that thought constantly. Sometimes I dream,
I am just an ordinary commoner making a living by
writing something quite ordinary.

SANZO: I see.

Scene 11 : MASA's Hospital Room
—REIKO meets His Majesty

REIKO comes in.

REIKO: Hello. How are you feeling?

MASA looks at REIKO.

MASA: Excuse me, but who are you?

REIKO: How do you do. My name is Reiko.

SANZO: She's a doctor, Your Majesty.

MASA: Hmm. I thought we were hiding away in a hospital to
deceive the police. In which case, why do we need the
court physician here?

SANZO: Well, that's because...

REIKO: It is just your annual check up. We thought we'd take
the opportunity.

MASA: Sylvia, I am leaving this place at once.

SANZO/REIKO: What?

MASA: Sylvia, you have been neglectful. How do you know
this person does not work for the Northern Court?

SANZO: Your Majesty...

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

MASA: It is so easy for physicians to feed me poison
disguised as medicine. It happens all the time.

MASA tries to get out of the bed. SANZO tries to stop him.

SANZO: *(Hasten to find an excuse)* Your Majesty, Dr. Reiko is
also a eunuch!

REIKO: What?

SANZO: We had our balls taken off at the same time. It was
very painful, wasn't it?

REIKO: Excuse me, but...

SANZO: Doesn't she look like a eunuch? Of course she went
for the full Monty, a complete sex change.

MASA: Sylvia, if I find that you're lying, it won't just be
your balls that are chopped off.

SANZO: I am aware of that, Your Majesty. Please look into my
eyes. Do I look like I am lying to you?

MASA: ...All right. *(To REIKO)* You must have gone through
so much.

REIKO: I am not a eunuch. Sylvia is lying.

SANZO: ...*(Doesn't know what to do)*

REIKO: Also, I do not belong either to the Southern Court or
the Northern Court.

MASA: What do you mean?

REIKO: I am a doctor. Doctors don't take sides. My only
concern is to make sure that Your Majesty is in the
best of health before going to the Palace.

MASA: ...

REIKO: Your Majesty, please trust me. If Doctors can poison,
they can also detect poisons in your food.

SANZO: *(Imitating Masa)* Fine, I shall trust you.

MASA: Sylvia, I should say that.

SANZO: Oh, I'm sorry. I have a tendency to interrupt other
people when I'm excited. Please continue.

REIKO: Please, trust me.

MASA: ...Fine. I shall trust you.

SANZO: Excellent! So, that solves the problem.

MASA: ...Sylvia, you have lied to me.

SANZO: Your Majesty. Please. I meant to say that Dr. Reiko is not just anyone; she's neither friend nor foe. She's able to break balls even without balls, if you see what I mean... *(All of a sudden)* I'm very sorry. I will never ever lie to you again.

REIKO: Couldn't you please forgive him?

MASA: Just this once. Bear in mind that you will not get another chance.

SANZO: Your Majesty. *(Bows very low)*

REIKO: So, Your Majesty. How are you feeling?

MASA: Fit as a fiddle, as you would put it. Though - It's hardly fit for an Emperor to fiddle.

REIKO/SANZO: Huh?

SANZO: Your Majesty! Was that a joke? It was a joke! I never imagined you like such a thing.

MASA: Sylvia.

SANZO: Yes.

MASA: *(Accusing him for not laughing)* Ladies-in-waiting usually laugh at my jokes.

SANZO: What?

MASA: I have a headache.

REIKO forces herself to laugh out loud all of a sudden. While laughing, her serious eyes send an indication to SANZO that he should do the same. SANZO manages to let out a laugh.

MASA: What do you call a fly with no wings?

SANZO: What?

MAZA: A walk.

REIKO and SANZO force themselves to laugh more.

MASA: What's brown and sticky? ...A stick.

REIKO and SANZO force themselves to laugh more.

MASA: Why did the apple go out with a fig?

REIKO: Because he couldn't get a date.

SANZO: Hahahahaha. *(Laughs)*

MASA: *(With dignity)* I make the jokes round here!

REIKO: I beg your pardon, Your Majesty.

MASA: I would have preferred a massage at the Palace to a massage on the Ward.

SANZO: Oh brilliant your Majesty! Hahahahaha. *(Laugh)*

MASA: *(With a severe tone)* Sylvia, that was not a joke.

SANZO: I do beg your pardon, Your Majesty.

SANZO tries to put another slice of apple in MASA's mouth.

MASA: Sylvia, I feel drowsy. I can't seem to keep my eyes open.

SANZO looks at REIKO. REIKO nods.

SANZO: Please rest, Your Majesty.

MASA: What do you call a sheep with no legs and no head?...
A cloud.

REIKO and SANZO force themselves to laugh. MASA falls asleep. SANZO's laughter turns into a sob. REIKO and SANZO stare at each other. Lights dim and focus only on REIKO.

REIKO: And so he slept on, thanks to a cocktail of tranquillisers and sleeping pills, there was nothing else we could do. If he was awake, he'd keep trying to get to the Palace. People believe that once you are in the realm of your delusion, you will be able to find peace. But this is a complete misunderstanding. The fact that the Emperor stroke Masa insists on going to the Palace indicates that Emperor stroke Masa himself is uneasy with his own choice of delusion.

Two weeks went by. I have managed to speak to His Majesty twice, but I haven't been able to speak to Masa yet.

Scene 12 : REIKO's Surgery —Rumours about REIKO

SANZO enters.

SANZO: Reiko.

REIKO: What's the matter, Sanzo?

SANZO: You still up?

REIKO: I had some work to finish, you?

SANZO: I can't sleep. Do you have a minute?

REIKO: What's wrong?

SANZO: Oh, nothing serious. How about a cup of coffee?

REIKO: Thanks.

SANZO starts making coffee.

SANZO: How long do you think he will be like this?

REIKO: I don't know. It could be for a week, or ten years. However long it takes, let's believe he'll come through.

SANZO: But what if he is never Masa again? What if he stays His Majesty?

REIKO: Then you will always remain his eunuch.

SANZO: How can you joke at times like this?

REIKO: Well, don't you at least find it better than His Majesty's jokes?

SANZO: (laughs) True ...Listen Reiko, everyone needs someone to talk to. You know I've become a sort of unofficial agony aunt for this hospital.

REIKO: Agony Aunt?

SANZO: I hear things.

REIKO: *(Her face clouds all of a sudden)* You shouldn't believe rumours.

SANZO: You never gossiped I know, or talked ill behind people's backs. I know you always hated the kids who did that.

REIKO: Well...

SANZO: Rumours are weird. When someone says something mean to your face, you might not be offended. But if you hear the same thing as a rumour, it can be a killer. Why the hell is that?

REIKO: Imagination makes the rumour complete.

SANZO: Yeah. People do exaggerate.

REIKO: No, that's not what I mean. I was talking about your own imagination when you hear what others are saying about you. You know your own weakness better than anyone and for some reason, you allow your mind to take you to the place that hurts the most.

SANZO: Bottling things up won't help, not for you, not for Masa.

REIKO: In my case, telling someone won't help.

SANZO: To deal with life, you need to be able to talk to someone who listens.

SANZO urges REIKO to speak. Pause.

REIKO: ...The rumour you've heard is probably true.

SANZO: What! So you're sleeping with an elephant seal!?

REIKO: Don't be stupid.

SANZO: So, what's the real story?

REIKO: Well, you know...it's kind of...well...that is to say...I'm sort of...in short...

SANZO: That's not short at all. 'Even' being a psychiatrist, you can't...

REIKO: Adultery. Full stop. That's all there is to it.

SANZO: That's too short.

REIKO: The man I fell in love with happened to have a wife and children. So I suppose that is what people would call a sordid affair.

SANZO: (*Imitating REIKO*) I suppose that is what people would call a sordid affair...Are you shy? How cute.

REIKO: You shouldn't tease doctors.

SANZO: (*Like a doctor*) So, I see. And what is this person's point of view on the situation?

REIKO: (*Reacting to the reverse of roles*) I suppose you want to wear the coat now.

SANZO: Woops. Sorry. You're the doctor. So, what's he saying?

REIKO: Nothing.

SANZO: Nothing?

REIKO: I mean nothing I could tell you.

SANZO: Does he say he won't leave his wife?

REIKO: He says his wife cries and his children cling on to him, begging him not to go. But I wonder...if any of it true?

SANZO: Good, you're getting there.

REIKO: You're quite good at this, aren't you?

SANZO: It's a gay thing. I'm practically a professional. I've helped as many people get back on their feet as I've pushed over the edge. So, tell me, what is he like?

REIKO: Just as the rumour says.

SANZO: The elephant seal!

REIKO: Okay. He's one of the doctors here.

SANZO: What! Which one?

REIKO: You don't have to pretend, I bet you've already gone to take a look at him, haven't you? We've been seeing each other since I came to this hospital as a trainee.

SANZO: So, would that be that short handsome guy!? Oh, goody. I'll have to go and offer him my congratulations.

REIKO: Sanzo!

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

SANZO: I'm just joking. It's a joke...But see, didn't that make you feel better?

REIKO smiles a little.

REIKO: Sanzo, what are you like when you fall in love? Are you devoted?

SANZO: Devoted? I devote myself until I suffocate him to death.

REIKO: What do you mean suffocate him to death?

SANZO: I do anything and everything for him but when he becomes spoilt, I leave him.

REIKO: I envy how Sylvia can be so uncomplicated. More coffee?

SANZO: At times like this, only alcohol will do. Don't you keep any?

REIKO: There's a bit of whisky?

SANZO: Now you're talking. Let's go get it and tell me how it all began.

REIKO: Sanzo, you tell me about your first affair?

SANZO: Absolutely not.

REIKO: Please! Please!

SANZO: All right then, you common hussy. But be prepared for the shock.

REIKO: Okay!

SANZO/REIKO: A drink, a drink!

REIKO and SANZO look at each other and smile. Lights go down.

Scene13: MASA's Hospital Room—MASA and His Majesty

Laughter. Lights come up. The hospital room where MASA lies. REIKO and SANZO are laughing, though we can see that the laughter does not come easily.

SANZO: Your Majesty's jokes are so funny.

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

MASA: You think so? How about this one... There was a English Samurai, an Irish Samurai and a Welsh Samurai and the Emperor says...

REIKO: *(Mimes to look at the clock)* Gosh is that the time. I shall have to go but I will come back again later.

MASA: Doctor, this joke is not funny unless you hear it to the end.

REIKO: Yes, I look forward to hearing it next time.
(To SANZO) Call me if you need anything.

REIKO exits.

MASA: Ahh. Entertaining one's subjects is never easy.

SANZO: *(Surprised)* You were trying to entertain us!

MASA suddenly gets serious.

MASA: Sylvia. Have you come up with a plan?

SANZO: ...No, Your Majesty. I'm terribly sorry but I still haven't.

MASA: Well then, I have an excellent idea.

SANZO: And what might that be?

MASA: Why don't we go and talk to the Field Marshal.

SANZO: I beg your pardon?

MASA: I realise now that going to the Palace directly would not be wise. We should go to the Army and tell them my story. I'm sure there would be someone who would understand.

SANZO: But Your Majesty...

MASA: Do not worry, Sylvia. I am not suggesting that we approach them directly.

SANZO: *(Relieved)* Yes, Your Majesty.

MASA: We shall approach them through the medium sympathetic with the Imperial family.

SANZO: And who might that be?

MASA: Hello Magazine, their journalists are the true servants of the Emperor.

SANZO: Y...Yes, Your Majesty...

SANZO is dismayed not knowing what to do.

MASA: What are you doing!? Contact them at once!

SANZO: Y...Yes...But...

MASA: Sylvia, don't make me lose my temper with you!

SANZO: Y...Yes but...

MASA: Never you mind. I shall go myself.

MASA tries to get out of the bed.

SANZO: Your Majesty!

SANZO tries to stop MASA. They wrestle and MASA falls from the bed.

SANZO: Your Majesty, are you all right?

SANZO carries MASA back onto the bed.

SANZO: I shall obey your orders. I'll go and call them immediately.

MASA: ...Wait.

SANZO: Yes?

MASA: Wait, Sanzo.

Being called by his name startles SANZO. MASA sits up on the bed.

MASA: Sanzo, where am I?

SANZO rushes to the bed and pushes the buzzer.

SANZO: Reiko! Doctor Reiko! Come! Please hurry!

REIKO rushes in.

SANZO: Reiko! It's Masa, Masa's back!

REIKO becomes professional in her manner and indicates to SANZO to calm down.

REIKO: How are you feeling?

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

MASA: (*Looking at SANZO*) Why are you so exited?

SANZO: How could I not be? You're finally back to Masa again.
I'm so happy...

MASA: Finally back?

SANZO: I... (*mumbles*)

REIKO: How is your headache?

MASA: What do you mean I'm finally back?

SANZO: What I mean...

MASA: Sanzo!

REIKO: Sanzo, could you leave us for a little while?

SANZO: What?

REIKO: Could you please leave things in the doctor's hands
for the moment?

SANZO: Umm...

REIKO: Don't worry. Everything will be all right.

SANZO leaves the room.

MASA: How long has it been since I came here?

REIKO: A little over two weeks.

MASA: (*Seriously*) I have been my other self, haven't I?

REIKO: ... (*Looks at MASA*)

MASA: Sanzo was excited because I came back to being me
from being my other self?

REIKO: ...

MASA: What was my other self thinking?

REIKO: ...

MASA: What did my other self want to do? That must be what
I truly want to do. Tell me, Reiko. What did my true
self want to do?

REIKO: What would be the point of you knowing that?

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

MASA: Isn't it obvious? Once I know what I truly want to do, my depersonalisation will be cured. Then, I can start my life again.

Pause.

REIKO: Your other self wanted to be an ordinary man.

MASA: What...What does that mean?

REIKO: Literally what I said. He wanted to be an ordinary man and make a living writing ordinary articles.

MASA: ...You're lying.

REIKO: What good would it do a doctor to lie to their patient? That is exactly what your other self said.

MASA: *(Smiling)* ...It's as if I'm in a dream.

REIKO: What?

MASA: Talking to you like this. It all seems like a dream.

REIKO: Are you feeling all right?

MASA: Doctor, where is Sylvia?

REIKO: !

MASA: I have something to tell Sylvia. Could you please call him.

REIKO: *(Little startled)* He just went to the toilet. He will be back soon.

MASA: I see. Is anything the matter?

REIKO: Why?

MASA: You look very sad.

REIKO: No, why should I be?

MASA: Why don't you tell me the truth?

REIKO: About what?

MASA: Last night, I took a little walk. I couldn't bear to wake Sylvia. He was sound asleep...This is a Psychiatric Hospital, isn't it?

REIKO: Your Majesty...

MASA: So who is the patient?

REIKO: No one, Your Majesty. We are admitting you so that we could deceive the police.

MASA: Does that mean I am allowed to go to the Palace?

REIKO: Yes, eventually.

MASA: Why don't we go there now? If I appear with a lady, I'm sure that the police would not do us any harm.

REIKO: Why would that be?

MASA: I'm afraid I would have to ask you to be my hostage. Of course, you would only have to pretend. Now, shall we go?

MASA stands up from the bed. REIKO immediately presses the buzzer twice.

MASA: What did you just do?

REIKO: Nothing.

MASA: Why do you lie? What did you just do!?

MASA approaches REIKO and pushes her down onto the bed.

REIKO: Your Majesty!

MASA grabs REIKO by the collar of her doctor's coat and shakes her firmly.

MASA: Tell me what you have just done! Why do you lie! Why do you have to lie to me!?

MASA covers REIKO's mouth and starts to strangle her. REIKO struggles hard.

REIKO: ...*(She cannot get her breath)*

MASA: Why, why do you try to interfere!? I have to go to the Palace!

REIKO struggles to free herself from MASA's hands. She slaps MASA. He recoils, she pushes him away. REIKO jumps away from the bed. MASA tries to jump onto REIKO.

REIKO: *(Pleading)* Masa!

MASA comes back to his senses.

MASA: ...Reiko.

REIKO's legs fail her and she sinks down onto the floor.

REIKO: ...Masa.

Footsteps are heard. REIKO stands up and turns towards the direction of the footsteps.

REIKO: *(Firmly)* It was nothing. The patient pushed it by mistake. I'm sorry to have troubled you.

REIKO turns around and looks at MASA again. MASA is stunned.

REIKO: *(With a weak smile)* Welcome back.... what took you so long...

MASA: Did...Did I do something unforgivable, Reiko?

REIKO: No, you didn't. Don't worry.

SANZO comes running in. Looks at the situation and misunderstands.

SANZO: No! I can't believe it! How could you!?

MASA and REIKO are surprised by his words.

REIKO: Listen, Sanzo.

SANZO: You listen! The bed sheets are messed up, two people out of breath, the smell of sweat. How many times have I walked in on a scene like this.
"Honey, I'm home?"
"He...he's a friend. We were just talking."
Why would you be sweating if you were just talking!
Do you talk while doing sit-ups!? Liar!
Oh why, oh why is it always like this? Always. A life of betrayal and treachery.
Oh God, please hear my prayer? What should I do?
"My poor lost lamb, Sylvia. Forgive. Forgiveness is the greatest gift"
Yes, God. I know this is another ordeal I will have to bear.
(To MASA and REIKO)
I will forgive you if it's just this once.

REIKO: What are you going on about? You've got it all wrong.

SANZO: Explain the state of the bed then!

REIKO: Masa, how are you feeling?

MASA: I have a headache.

REIKO: Do you want to go to bed?

MASA: I think I will.

REIKO helps MASA to lie down.

MASA: But Reiko, I'm afraid of falling asleep. I feel that once I'm asleep, I might wake up from this dream.

REIKO: What do you mean?

MASA: I feel this is a dream and I can't help thinking that to fall asleep is waking up to reality.

REIKO: Don't worry. There's nothing to worry about. Masa, you're gradually getting better. Sleep a little more and you'll be well in no time. Why don't you take the medicine.

REIKO takes out the medicine.

MASA: Reiko, will you always be by my side even if I went insane?

REIKO: You won't go insane.

SANZO: I will always be by your side.

REIKO: Here, take these.

MASA swallows the medicine.

REIKO: Sleep tight. I'm sure you'll be well again once you have a good rest.

MASA: Do you honestly think so? Honestly...

MASA falls asleep. REIKO slumps as if all her energy has escaped from her body. SANZO asks her looking seriously.

SANZO: So, what happened?

REIKO with a weak smile looks at SANZO. Black Out. The lights come on REIKO.

REIKO: I decided to tell only Sanzo about what had happened. If I made an official report, Masa would have been

transferred to a secure hospital. Sanzo would not have been able to look after him and Masa would have been out of my reach.

Sanzo was exhausted. Because every time Masa woke, he shouted and repeatedly demanded to be taken to the Palace. We needed to take turns to distract him. It had come to a point where if he became more deranged, I, as his Doctor, would've been forced to make the difficult decision to move him.

Five days have passed and only the Emperor - no sign at all of Masa.

Scene 14 : REIKO's Surgery —Disappearance of His Majesty

We hear SANZO's voice.

SANZO: Reiko! Reiko!

Lights come up. SANZO comes running in.

REIKO: What's the matter!?

SANZO: He's gone!

REIKO: Gone!?

SANZO: I must have dozed off. When I woke up, he was gone!

REIKO: Check the other wards. I'll try the front door.

SANZO: I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, Reiko!

REIKO: It's not your fault, Sanzo. Let's go and look for him!

SANZO: Yes.

REIKO and SANZO run off in opposite directions and exits. Some time later, SANZO comes running back in again. REIKO comes back in after him.

REIKO: Did you find him?

SANZO: *(Shaking his head)* No, he keeps moving around. He was last seen on ward eight.

REIKO: No sign at Reception. Unless he climbed over the back fence, he must be somewhere in the hospital.

SANZO: I'll keep looking!

SHOJI KOKAMI

TRANCE

REIKO: Me too.

SANZO runs and exits. REIKO runs in opposite direction and exits. After a while, REIKO comes running back in. SANZO follows.

SANZO: Anything?

REIKO: He was seen in the nurses' room.

SANZO: The nurses' room!?

REIKO: They didn't suspect anything.

SANZO: Where could His Majesty be! We've looked everywhere!

They are desperate to find him but don't know what to do. Then suddenly, REIKO comes up with an idea.

REIKO: Ah!

SANZO: What!?

REIKO: ...The rooftop.

SANZO: The rooftop!?

REIKO and SANZO start running.

----- INTERVAL -----

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