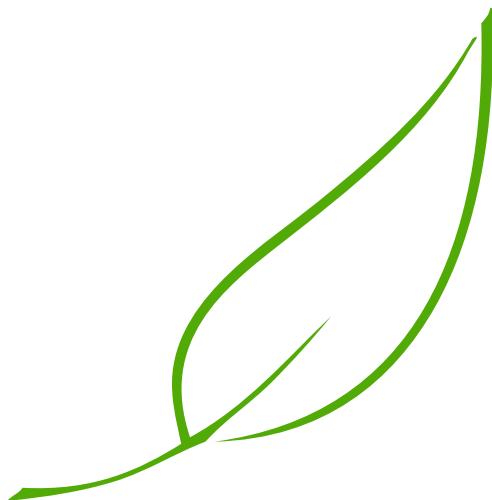


A MOTHER IN MY HEAD

By Christopher L. King



GREEN ROOM PRESS

greenroompress.com

Copyright Notice

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Green Room Press. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Green Room Press. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Green Room Press. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Green Room Press.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this Work must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this Work. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the Work. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this Work is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice: ***Produced by special arrangement with Green Room Press.***

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Green Room Press.

A MOTHER IN MY HEAD

By Christopher L. King

A MOTHER IN MY HEAD

By Christopher L. King

SYNOPSIS: Mary and Manny are two quite different people; but they have a lot in common. They barely hold their lives together, they both work at the same large company, and they both have mothers in their heads 24/7 coaching every move. Is it possible to fall in love under these circumstances? It's a struggle, but they manage it, and end up with two quirky kids, capable of driving any mother nuts. Under these circumstances can they find career advancement, the car of their dreams, and the off switch for those constant internal voices?

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1-2 males, 3-4 females; doubling possible)

MARY ABLE (f)	A trim, businesslike exterior and neat-nick habits hide a woman with a nose for nature and a desire to laugh at what others take most seriously.
MANNY BAKER (m)	A man who struggles to lead an orderly life despite the clowns and gremlins who live under his skin.
MRS. A (f)	A disciplined woman who prides herself on old and cherished family traditions, which she has invented to match the drapes.
MRS. B (f)	A woman who prizes her Old Country roots and her family ties and happens to be sharp as a whip in business.
MATTY (m).....	Mary and Manny's son. Best doubled by the actor playing Manny.
MINDEE (f).....	Mary and Manny's daughter. Best doubled by the actor playing Mary.

SET AND PROPS

ACT ONE

The set is divided so that there is a feeling of Manny's world stage left and Mary's world stage right. A chair and a small table for each and simple rolling platforms could serve as beds, desks, dining table.

Upstage and center of the areas for Manny and Mary are high stools or platforms with chairs for Mrs. A stage right and Mrs. B stage left.

On Manny's table is a wrapped fruit basket. On Mary's, a basket with red, blue and black scarves and a hairbrush. Downstage left and right are freestanding arches to indicate elevators.

NOTE: Act Two takes place several years later, after the marriage of Mary and Manny.

ACT TWO

Lightweight wheeling deck loungers for the opening scene. Various chairs can serve as auto seats for other scenes. Manny and Mary can scoot around in rolling secretarial chairs. (Manny's could be a rolling bar stool, or cranked up to max height, Mary's at its lowest level.) Backpacks for the kids, and iPod for Mindee and a Gameboy for Matty. Notepads for the mothers in the opening of Act Two. Cellphones. The outfits for Matty and Mindee should be exaggerated and oversized.

NOTE: For mobility's sake, the play is conceived with bare minimum set and props.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE: *At curtain rise, MANNY is asleep on top of his twisted covers. He is wearing a long nightshirt over a white shirt, bold patterned boxer shorts and high black socks. MARY is in flannel pajamas, stick-straight in her bed, the covers pulled up to her nose.*

MRS. A is writing in a datebook. She wears a dapper suit. MRS. B is doing needlework. She wears a comfortable dress, perhaps with an apron.

The play can also be presented with only four stools, high stools for the mothers and lower stools for MARY and MANNY, all properties being mimed.

The lights slowly rise under the first lines.

MRS. A: Mary.

MRS. B: Manny.

MRS. A: Mary.

MRS. B: Manny.

MRS. A: Mary!

MRS. B: Manny!

MRS. A: *(Like treacle.)* Mary, it's time to get up.

MARY: Mmm nnn. Go away!

MRS. B: *(Like a trumpet.)* Manny, wake up!

MANNY: *(Thrashes and fights.)* Pass to me! Pass to me! Stop the giraffe!

MRS. A: Mary, dear!

MARY pulls the covers over her head and whines.

MRS. B: Manny. Hey! Manny!

MANNY: Its tail was out of bounds!

MRS. A: What happens to girls who won't get up?

MARY: What? *(Sits bolt upright.)* What?

MRS. B: Manny! Get to work!

MANNY: *(Falls over himself getting out of bed.)* What, no, hey, its,
I . . .

MRS. B: Manny!

MANNY: What do you want? *(Pulls nightshirt over his head to reveal white shirt and freezes.)*

MRS. A: Mary!

MARY: Oh. What time is it? Oh. *(She gets out of bed like a sleepwalker, walks like a zombie toward the bathroom.)*

MRS. A: Don't we want our . . . ?

MARY: Slippers. *(Manages to get one on, fumbles for glasses on table, and heads to bathroom door.)*

MRS. B: Manny, is that a . . .

MANNY: . . . clean shirt? When did I . . . when did I? *(Sniffs sleeve of shirt.)* S'okay. *(Sniffs inside the shirt. Makes a face.)* Better wash up. *(Disappears into the bathroom. He sings in imitation operatic Italian.)* Ah bella donna, bella donna como va...!

MARY emerges from her shower with a towel turban on her head. Sits at dresser and gives a little scream when she sees herself.

MARY: This is impossible! I've got ten minutes to get ready and this face needs major re-plastering.

MRS. A: It takes pains to be beautiful.

MARY takes off the turban and begins beating up her hair.

MARY: Pains! Pains! You'd think I was some kind of clipped poodle. Pains. What about my MBA? What about my experience? Beautiful? I work my way up to district manager so I can worry about whether my mousse is working?

MRS. A: When I was a girl my mother had me brush my hair every morning . . . one hundred strokes up . . .

MARY: . . . and one hundred strokes down. You'd think she was Scarlet O'Hara. My mousse isn't working!

MRS. A: A worthy mate wants a woman is poised . . .

MARY: . . . but "coquettish" . . .

MRS. A: . . . intelligent.

MARY: . . . but not superior . . .

*This perusal script is for reading purposes only.
No performance or photocopy rights are conveyed.*

MRS. A: . . . direct . . .

MARY: . . . but not brash . . .

MRS. B: The man upstairs is going to flush!

MRS. A: A man likes a mate with a little class . . .

MARY: And a firm . . .

MANNY: AAHHH! There goes the hot water. I'm going to kill you, you old buzzard! May you choke on a lump of your wife's boiled cabbage!

MRS. B: Manny, get a move on! You plan a little, for once you got time by the tail.

MANNY emerges like a troglodyte from cave, stuffing his shirt into his trousers.

MANNY: The tail. The tail. Ohmygod! Look at the time!

MRS. B: (*Pouting.*) My baby has to eat.

MANNY: Ooh, food. Fooood. I'm . . . I'm . . . hungry! (*MANNY looks around the room in desperation, spots the fruit basket.*) Wha', wha', what's this? (*MANNY tears the wrapping off and finds a card.*) My beloved son . . .

MRS. B: . . . congratulations on your promotion. May it be only one of a string of many. Enjoy . . .

MANNY: . . . enjoy, Mama. That's so nice. Promotion? Promotion? What promotion? She's such a kidder.

MANNY stumbles out juggling coat, briefcase, banana, apple.

MARY pulls scarves from the basket and lays them one by one against her cheek.

MRS. A: The blue accents the glow in your eyes . . . the red warms your cheeks.

MARY: The blue accents the circles under my eyes and the red highlights my acne. Black. Definitely black. (*She chooses a black one.*)

MARY stands and primps before an invisible full-length mirror downstage.

MRS. A: How a woman cares for herself reveals how she cares for others. Breakfast is the vital meal of the day. You break your fast. Replenish and refresh for the days Herculean efforts. A woman's body is a temple . . .

MARY: So why does no one worship me? (*MARY walks upstage of the elevator arch and mimics opening a fridge door. Freezes.*) Hmm. Nothing . . . nothing . . . piece of Jane's wedding cake. Is that tuna fish? A bagel! . . . with something green it. Pesto? And OJ? (*Drinks OJ from bottle.*) Ugh, OJ, with vodka. Better run!

MRS. A: Poise. Poise. Poise. Poise. Poise . . . Useless.

MARY darts off stage left.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

If rolling set pieces are used, the MOTHERS descend from their pedestals and move the cubes and chairs from the bedroom area to stage left and right center where they become desks. Props can be a telephone, keyboard and open frame to indicate a monitor on each desk.

MARY and MANNY come scurrying from stage left and right, respectively. Both are trailing coats and brief cases. MARY wears the bagel on the third finger of her left hand. MANNY spots MARY and turns around to tidy up. She does the same.

MRS. A: Compose yourself now, dear. We don't want to appear too eager or hasty. This is just one young man among many. Nothing particularly remarkable. Be casual and friendly and allow him to be the same.

MANNY: Ohmygod, ohmygod, it's her! I was going to kind of sneak round past her cube later . . . But here she is!

MRS. B: Manny. Manny! Chill it. She's a person . . . nothing so special, just somebody in your office. She eats, she sleeps, she . . . never mind . . . don't jump right out of your stall. Relax.

MANNY turns. He has the banana in one hand like a pistol. He drops his coat and jams the apple in his mouth. MARY picks up the coat and holds it out to him.

MANNY: Mmf-ymm.

MARY: You're welcome. I like the apple effect. It's kind of like that painting by Magritte . . . you know the one? Only that one is green . . . the apple, I mean . . . and it's bigger than the guy's face and he's wearing a bowler hat, y'know the English kind that are round on top. You know the . . . Help!

As MARY is speaking MRS. A's eyes come up and fix her daughter in horror.

MRS. A: Shhhhhh!

MRS. B: Manny! Lose the fruit.

MRS. A: Show off! You have totally destroyed any shred of poise and grace. Babbling like a tour guide. Surely you aren't cowed by this rather . . . comical young man. Look at him!

MANNY: *(All in a rush.)* Hi-I'm-Manny-Baker-I've-been-hoping-planning-wanting-to-meet-you-but-I-guess-until-now-really-didn't . . .

MRS. B: Manny! Speak to the woman. Calmly. In words of English. One at a time. Show her dignity. Show her confidence like you believe in who you are.

MANNY: Who am I?

MARY: I beg your pardon? Aren't you Manny Baker? Hi, I'm Mary Able.

MANNY: *(Offering his hand, with a banana in it.)* Hi . . . Hi . . . Hi, Mary. I'm Manny. Baker. You knew that. Right.

MARY: Is that a banana in your hand, or are you just glad to see me?

MRS. A: Mary, really! Witticisms are one thing but to resort to vulgarities. What kind of woman do you want him to think you are? This is tantamount to inviting sexual harassment.

MRS. B: Mae West. She's quoting Mae West . . .

MANNY: Mae West, from that movie with Cary Grant, right?

MARY: Right. I love classics . . . uh . . . is that your breakfast?

MANNY: Oh, yeah. Is that yours? Or are married to a baker or something?

MARY: What? Oh. Ha ha. No. Not yet, but . . .

MRS. A: (*With MRS. B.*) Mary, Mary, no, no, poise, poise.

MRS. B: Manny, Manny, stop, stop, cool it, cool it.

MARY: Poise.

MANNY: Cool. So is this a proposal?

MARY: Yeah right, but hey, I will trade you this bagel for the banana.
(*She clasps it.*) Lots of potassium.

MRS. A: Potassium?

MARY: No, wait, the apple would be better. You aren't a snake in disguise, are you?

MANNY: What?

MRS. B: The devil.

MARY: Adam and Eve . . .

MANNY: Hey, sure, yeah, it's not much. I just rushed out of the house, apartment really, and grabbed this stuff, and I missed my bus . . . but that's okay because I didn't miss you. No, that sounds wrong, actually I did miss you. I mean I didn't . . .

MRS. B: Careful.

MARY: That's cute, that's sweet. Uh oh, here's the elevator. You on an even floor?

MANNY: Odd.

MRS. B: Don't say it.

MANNY: Fits me, huh?

MRS. B: You had to.

MANNY: Hey, what's your interoffice number?

MARY: 1945. Like the end of World War Two. What's yours?

MANNY: 2929, like uh . . . like uh . . .

MARY: Crash! Depression! Okay, thanks. Call. Bye!

MANNY: I wasn't that bad . . . or was I?

MRS. A AND MRS. B: Disaster!

MARY and MANNY exit their elevators go to their desks by a loop that goes amongst other imaginary employees. They speak simultaneously. Arriving at their desks, each finds a cup of coffee and sits.

MARY: Good morning! . . . Morning! . . . Hi! . . . Thank you, Steve . . . Thanks Judith, yours is great, too. (Bitch!) . . . Just fine, thanks . . . Morning!

MANNY: How ya doin'! . . . Morning! . . . Good morning! . . . Pats by a TD . . . 'Preciate it, Hal. (Bastard!) . . . Doin' alright . . . Morning!

MARY "sorts papers" and checks her email.

MRS. A: Well! What about that? Here was your opportunity to make a good showing for a nice young man, although none too nice, mind you. Where do you suppose he has his hair done? And that suit! Do you really know what you're getting into, striking up a friendship with a person like that? The way you carried on . . .

MANNY sips his coffee and gazes into space.

MRS. B: Oh, forget it. A preppy girl like that give you a tumble? Get real. Stick to something sure. Don't blow off a good one like Ethel's cousin Sophie. A nice quiet girl, knows how to treat. With this one, don't bother. She's all cottage cheese and mayonnaise and you're liverwurst and onions. No meat on her legs, either.

MANNY: God, she has happy eyes!

MRS. A: Keep your mind on your career, dear. You have a certain elegance, a tool you can parlay into unlimited success if you are willing to persevere. I didn't raise my little girl to be a baby machine and a cook for some oaf's brats. You need to look to the future, set your goals and pursue them relentlessly.

MARY: He's kind of cute.

Phone buzzes.

MARY: Yes, Miss Fishbine?

MRS. A: Mary, you remember the Crank and Dudgeon account must be on my desk by noon. I don't have to overemphasize that the reputation of this department and a significant contract depend on that report being immaculate. So please give it your utmost . . . won't you, dear?

MARY: Yes, Mummy. I mean, certainly, Miss Fishbine. (*Hangs up.*)
Gee, that's funny.

Phone buzzes.

MANNY: Uh-huh.

MRS. B: (*Unctuous.*) This is Mrs. Donalson in human resources. I just wanted to deliver a little treat to go with your morning coffee . . . and your bagel . . . and your banana.

MANNY: Huh?

MRS. B: This is to inform you that as of ten this morning, as per Mr. Southington, you have been advanced to district manager, grade three. You will receive official confirmation by interoffice mail and at quarterly review, but this is my little contribution to your breakfast. Don't thank me. Thank Mr. Southington. And please brush the crumbs off your mouse pad into the wastebasket. Have a nice day.

MANNY: Thanks, Mama. I mean, Mrs. Donalson.

MRS. B: (*As MRS. B.*) So how are you going to prove you deserve this little unexpected, some might say generous, gift?

MANNY: I wanna, I wanna, I wanna tell . . . Mary. Gosh, what was her number? Something about World War Two. Crash. Depression. Oh Lord . . . what is her last name? It starts with . . . It starts with . . . (*He picks up the phone, pushes buttons.*) Hi, Mrs. Donalson?

MRS. B: Yeeees? Oh, Mr. Baker. Calling to confirm? It's true. Quite a surprise to us all, but true nonetheless. Who knows the workings of Mr. Southington's crafty mind?

MANNY: No, that isn't it. I want to talk to a certain person in the company regarding the, let us say, effects this promotion will allow me to, let us say, affect, here and elsewhere to our mutual advantage.

MRS. B: And who is this fortunate person?

MANNY: Well, we took a kind of hurried meeting the last time we, we conferred, and I . . . well, her name is Mary.

MRS. B: Yes, Mary whom?

MANNY: Well, I thought maybe you . . . I think she has been with the company a couple of months, kind of slim, mostly straight . . . hair, nice, uh, uh . . . personality!

MRS. B: Yes, well, that could be Mary Cox in shipping

MANNY: Gee, thanks. What's . . .

MRS. B: . . . or Mary Wentworth in sales, just lost her husband, you know, tragic . . . or Mary Beaumont, no, but she's the CEO's mistress. Maybe Mary Carpenter . . .

MANNY: She kind of wears scarves a lot.

MRS. B: Ahh! And she was wearing a black one this morning. . . carrying a bagel. And you spoke to her in front of the elevators.

MANNY: Yes, yes, exactly.

MRS. B: Sorry, could be anyone. You are just going to have to bump into her. Good luck!

MANNY: Nuts! (*Phone buzzes.*) Yeah?

Each of the MOTHERS picks up a phone.

MARY: Hi, is this Crash, Depression?

MANNY: Huh?

MARY: Manny?

MANNY: Yeah? Who is this?

MRS. A: Don't be forward now. You don't want to rush into things.

MARY: This is Mary . . . Mary Able . . . We met in front of the elevators . . . traded breakfasts?

MANNY: Mary? What was that depression . . . ?

MARY: You know. The year of the big financial crash and the beginning of the great depression, 1929. Twice. Your number.

MRS. A: Fine, now you're the History Channel?

MRS. B: Take it easy now, champ. What does she want?

MANNY: Hey! I'm glad you remembered. I kind of forgot your number in the rush and all. I'm always forgetting numbers. Not faces or places, that's easy. 'Course, I remembered Mary because that's like . . .

MRS. B: Please.

MRS. A: Don't.

MARY: . . . the virgin, right . . . Well, I hope I won't always . . . never mind.

MRS. A: Close call.

MARY: I'm just taking a little break from this nasty report I'm doing, and I noticed you right there . . .

MRS. B: Uh-uh. There you are. She's watching your . . . prospects.

MARY: . . . on the participants report section, and I wanted to congratulate you. Hey, we're both district managers now. We'll be getting together at quarterly and stuff.

MRS. A: Don't push, dear.

MANNY: Hey, thanks. I didn't realize the news was in the grapevine yet. I wanted to call you . . .

MRS. B: Don't show all your cards!

MANNY: Wow, so here we are, so now maybe I have all these heavy bucks to sling around, I thought, maybe . . . well . . .

MARY: Yes?

MANNY: We could have some lunch, or something . . .

MRS. B: "Or something?"

MARY: Well, this report that I have to get done by noon or Miss Fishface will tie my underwear in knots . . .

MRS. A: And you were almost showing some cultivation. Well, look at the source of inspiration.

MANNY: Okay, well, sure, if you're too busy today, we could, like, put it off for a couple of days . . . I've got my banana.

MRS. B: Forceful.

MARY: No, that's alright. I'll get it done, or die trying. Where did you want to go?

MANNY: Well, actually, until after the end of the week, I . . .

MRS. A: Mr. Nodoh makes his big move.

MANNY: I figured today it would have to be the good old Cafe Houn' Dog.

MARY: Gee, I don't think I've heard of that. Is it nearby? It'll have to be. I've got maybe half an hour I can squeak in.

MANNY: Right in the building.

MARY: Oh. You mean the cafeteria. But what did you call it?

MANNY: Cafe Houn' Dog. It's for the delectable boiled weenies on dry buns that are the only edible thing on the menu.

MARY: Personally, I favor the runny tuna rollup. But everyone to his own dog or fish. I'll bring my, your, apple.

MANNY: Great. Later, then.

MARY: Mmm, later.

MANNY: Yeah, later . . .

MARY: Hey Manny, do you ever wonder about these phones. I swear sometimes I hear breathing and funny little voices.

MANNY: It's your mother keeping tabs on you.

MARY: My mother! That's funny!

The mothers slam down their phones and whistle.

MANNY: So, when? Maybe twelve-fifteen, twelve-thirty . . . ?

MARY: Twelve-fifteen. I'll push to get this dumb thing done.

MANNY: Far out!

MRS. B: Far out?

MARY: See you then, ta ta!

MRS. A: Ta ta?

MANNY: *(Throws a fist in the air.)* Yes!

MARY: Woo!

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

They both get up and proceed to the elevators. During the elevator sequence, the MOTHERS could move the desks downstage side by side to become a cafeteria table. MANNY and MARY stand in separate elevators, looking up.

MRS. B: Manny, don't rush. You don't want to look like a putz. Be cool. Get to know her. She could be some kind of gold digger . . .

MRS. A: Remember, manners. A little coy is a good thing. Don't tell or show too much. No man likes a blabbermouth.

MRS. B: Try to find out something about her family. They could be axe murderers.

MRS. A: Draw him out. A man likes to talk about himself. You listen. You smile, and he thinks you're a great conversationalist.

MRS. B: I hope your socks don't stink.

MRS. A: Did you check your breath? You know you had that gum problem.

MRS. B: It's okay to bail out if she's a dog. Look how she dresses. Goop in her hair, she's a floozy.

MRS. A: Some of these men are just after one thing. Look him straight in the eye.

MRS. B: Maybe it's too soon for this.

MRS. A: Keep it casual.

MARY AND MANNY: Help!

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

MANNY and MARY enter downstage to the cafeteria by different doors. They pick up trays and food. They spot each other and wave, then join at the table side by side, facing the audience.

MANNY: Hi.

MARY: Hi.

MANNY: Just get here?

MARY: Just got here.

They sit on same side of table.

MANNY: Y'mind if we sit this way?

MARY: It's nice.

MANNY: Okay?

MARY: Okay.

They sit and eat.

MRS. A: You were raised to be a stimulating conversationalist. Don't overdo it. Keep it light, scintillating. Find a topic of mutual interest, not politics or religion. Encourage him to talk about his favorite sport, his goals, his dreams.

MRS. B: You know how to talk. So talk.

They sit and eat.

MANNY: Lotta people . . . eating.

*This perusal script is for reading purposes only.
No performance or photocopy rights are conveyed.*

MRS. B snorts.

MARY: 'S a big company . . . and it's, like, noontime.

MRS. A sighs.

MARY AND MANNY: (*Fast.*) So now we're going to be working together . . . sometimes. (*Pause.*) That was funny . . . I . . . (*Pause.*) You go ahead. (*Pause.*) This is weird. (*Pause, eat.*) Really . . . I wanna hear about . . . Wow!

MRS. B: Manny, shut up!

MANNY waggles his arms, gestures that MARY should go ahead.

MRS. A: Just be yourself, dear.

MARY: I might as well say it. I feel like there's something happening here . . . isn't there?

MANNY nods vigorously.

MARY: I mean . . .

MRS. A: Careful, dear.

MARY: I can usually talk . . . pretty good . . . well. Only . . . I . . . at the elevator . . . today . . . talking . . . in the morning and the bagel and the banana, no, the apple . . . in your mouth. But I took it anyway . . . I did, and your coat on the floor and everything. It was funny . . . good funny . . . people said that . . . that you were good funny and I did see you one time at the softball game, you were playing with Bill, Shipton I think it is, was batting or something and your hair was kind of in your face, and I kept wondering if you could see the ball or had some kind of softball radar or something. Of course, you didn't see me because, well, you don't, didn't, know me but I sort of thought you looked over at me, or maybe was it Alice because she has those big . . . and when she runs they . . . bounce?

MRS. A: Eloquent.

MANNY: Uh huh. It was you. Only I didn't want to show . . . be . . . like obvious. So thanks. On the phone call, I mean. 'Cause who knew . . . and then you . . . of all people. I kept seeing my apple with, like my teeth marks, on it and you biting, too . . . oh wow! (*He shivers.*) The bagel was good, okay, a little stale but that's okay, no, really. It was, the bread was alright . . . that other stuff . . . but I said, like, don't even ask. Just go ahead and eat, cuz she did, was going to, but she gave it to me. So the stuff on the bagel, I figured, like Chinese food, don't ask, just eat, you know, if you like Chinese. If you like Chinese, maybe we could like, eat some together, sometime, or . . .

MRS. B: Masterful

MARY: Sure.

MANNY: Huh?

MARY: You asked me . . . out. To eat. Right?

MANNY: I did? Hey! I did!

MRS. B: Two points.

MARY: Where? When?

MANNY: What? Oh, I don't suppose . . . would tonight be too soon?

MRS. A: Of course.

MARY: No.

MANNY: Wong's, around the corner?

MARY: Uh, sure.

MANNY: Y'want me to pick you up? Or what?

MRS. A: Yes. Certainly.

MARY: Nah. I'll meet you there.

MANNY: Sure?

MARY: Yup.

MANNY: When?

MARY: Seven-thirtyish. Okay?

MANNY: Okay.

They sit silently for a bit.

MANNY: This is neat!

MARY: Yeah. It is.

Again they sit.

MANNY: Well, I guess it's back to the squirrel wheel.

MARY: Yup. Wish we didn't have to. This is nice.

MANNY: It really is.

MARY: Race you to the elevator!

They go.

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

Meet each other out of breath between the elevators.

MANNY: Déjà vu

MARY: Beg pardon?

MANNY: Where we met.

MARY: Yeah. Here it is.

In the elevator they are uncomfortably aware of other passengers (mothers).

MRS. B: Well. Do you really know what you are doing? Who is this woman, anyway? Two times you talk to her and now you are ready for anything. You'll buy her food. You'll eat her moldy bagel. Getting a little thin on top, and I don't mean Hair Club for Men.

MRS. A: Where did it go? All that orthodonture, the modern dance classes, the computer club, the girl's rugby team. Now here you are all goo goo for . . . for what? This man dresses as though he had ambitions of being a street sweeper. Think. Think, darling, what you are doing before you eat too much of his egg foo young.

MRS. B: I reserve judgment. Behind that easygoing smile and those perfectly fixed teeth . . . who knows . . . maybe a perfect bobcat . . . I reserve judgment.

MRS. A: You can't be too careful, especially with all these STPs a girl could catch. He might look like a nice clean boy. But who knows if Mr. Hyde is hiding behind that sweet Jekyll smile. You can't be too careful.

*This perusal script is for reading purposes only.
No performance or photocopy rights are conveyed.*

MRS. B: Maybe you'd better call it off. Aren't you kind of rushing into things?

MRS. A: Maybe you're into rushing things. Hadn't you better call it off?

MANNY and MARY step from their elevators . . . stop . . . shake their heads.

MANNY AND MARY: Nah!

ACT ONE, SCENE 6

The MOTHERS could arrange the desks. MANNY and MARY move back to their desks in a daze, giving little waves or an unconscious "Hi." They sit and each gazes into space. Then they both log on to their e-mail and begin to write.

MARY: Dear Mummy . . .

MANNY: Dear Mama . . .

MARY: I am stealing a little time from work to write you about something wonderful that has happened . . .

MANNY: I just met this really fascinating girl, woman really, who also works right here in the company.

MARY: He isn't exactly what you'd call the classic tall, dark and handsome. But he has this really neat little smile which kind of crinkles at the corners . . .

MANNY: And she has this really fine sense of humor. Well, she's not exactly a stand-up comedian, but there is something funny about her, I mean, humorous . . . I can't explain it.

MARY: We haven't talked much yet, but I have a feeling we will be finishing each other's sentences. I just look in those moist, dark eyes and . . .

MANNY: . . . when she touched me, just lightly while we were eating, I felt this funny tingle and it was a little hard to breathe and . . .

MARY: . . . when he turned back to look at me at the elevator my tummy and my legs started getting all funny. I felt sort of stupid, but somehow it wasn't stupid at all, only . . .

MANNY: . . . I was kind of surprised that she agreed to go out so soon, I mean, I don't think she's fast or anything. But I bet if I put my hands on her waist and then kind of pulled her gently toward me . . .

MARY: . . . I could open my mouth just a little and . . .

MANNY: . . . She would look right into my eyes and tilt her chin up just a little . . .

MARY: . . . and his hand would drift ever so gently . . .

The MOTHERS duck their heads around the screens (or speak from off stage.)

MRS. B: What?

MRS. A: I beg your pardon?

Both MARY and MANNY quickly read what they have written. Each gives a little squeak.

MARY AND MANNY: Delete, delete, delete, delete.

MARY and MANNY both go busily back to work. After a while, they freeze into stargazing again. A DOUBLE CHIME snaps them out of it as MRS. B's unctuous voice comes over a speaker.

MRS. B: It's five o'clock. Thank you so much for your splendid productivity. We here at Apex are always grateful for that extra little effort. Have a pleasant evening.

MARY and MANNY leave almost as distractedly as they came in.

MANNY: Night! . . . See ya! . . . Sure will! . . . I still say Tigers by six . . . Have a good one . . . Thanks. (Bastard!) . . . Night, night.

MARY: Night . . . Thanks, Sue . . . Never mind. Doesn't matter . . . Good luck! . . . See ya tomorra! . . . Why, certainly! (Bitch!) . . . Take care.

MRS. B: *(From off. Voice goes from inaudible to loud. MRS. B alternates with MRS. A.)* Manny? Manny? Manny. Manny. Manny!

MRS. A: *(From off. Voice also amplifies. Alternates with MRS. B.)*
Mary? Mary? Mary. Mary. Mary!
MANNY AND MARY: What?
MRS. A AND MRS. B: Be careful.

ACT ONE, SCENE 7

MANNY and MARY change in their rooms. MANNY sings his fake arias again while he puts on a Hawaiian shirt. As they change, the cafeteria table is replaced with a small table with a checkered tablecloth. A scroll with Chinese characters, a dragon, or a Chinese lamp could indicate the restaurant. MANNY primps and MARY checks herself in the mirror. MARY and MANNY rush out of their apartments over to the restaurant. The mothers enter from wings dressed in identical Asian garb and pick up menus. MRS. A becomes maitre d' and MRS. B the waiter in the restaurant. (Please do not make the mothers Chinese stereotypes.) MARY and MANNY try to look cool as they enter. MRS. A greets them.

MRS. A: Welcome to Wong's. How many, please?
MANNY: Two.
MRS. A: So. You are together?
MANNY: Yes.
MRS. A: *(To MARY.)* Is this correct? You are with . . . him?
MARY: Yes . . . yes.
MRS. A: You're not sure? I can seat you separately.
MANNY: No, no, we're sure. Table for two.
MRS. A: *(Chilly.)* Table for two. Smoking or non-smoking?
MANNY: Doesn't matter.
MRS. A: *(To MANNY.)* Do you smoke?
MANNY: No . . . no.
MRS. A: Are you sure?
MANNY: Well, yes . . . of course.
MRS. A: Did you ever smoke?
MANNY: No . . . no. *(She eyes him suspiciously.)* Well . . . I tried . . . once. But I didn't inhale.
MRS. A: Fine. Fine.

She leads them to the table.

MRS. B: Don't you want to pull out the chair for the lady?

MANNY: Oh, sure . . . of course. Mary.

MARY: Thank you, Manny. That's sweet.

MRS. A glares at MRS. B.

MRS. A: Would you like a cocktail before your meal?

MANNY: Uh . . . hey . . . whaddaya think, Mary? This is kind of a celebration. You want some beer . . . or wine . . . or one of those pink things with the umbrella? I love those umbrellas.

MARY: Well . . . uh . . . (*MRS. A clears her throat.*) those umbrella things are always too sweet for me.

MRS. B: Don't say it.

MANNY: Nothing could be too sweet for you.

MRS. B: He said it.

MARY: Maybe just some white wine with a spritz.

MRS. A clears her throat.

MARY: Maybe just the spritz . . . with a twist.

MRS. B: Don't say it.

MANNY: That's a twist.

MRS. A: And for you, young man? (*MANNY hesitates.*) Perhaps you are driving?

MANNY shakes his head.

MANNY: (*Under his breath.*) Maybe a small beer.

MRS. A: I beg your pardon.

MANNY: Ginger ale. Yes. Ginger ale.

MRS. A: Very good. Now this is Mrs. B. She will be your waiter if you want or need anything at all.

MRS. B: Just let me know when you are ready to order. We want to make you feel right at home.

MANNY AND MARY: Thanks. Thanks.

MRS. A exits to prepare drinks. MRS. B hovers.

MARY: Boy, I've heard of family-style restaurants . . . but this one takes the cake.

MANNY: Well, maybe the fortune cookies.

MARY: Ha ha. You're funny, Manny. It's just great to have a chance to get to know you better.

MANNY: Do you really mean that? I mean . . . I don't think of myself as much of a ladies' man and . . . hey . . . to be here with you . . . just the two of us . . . is kind of unbelievable.

Their heads sway together. Mrs. B surges up.

MRS. B: Excuse me! You ready to order?

MANNY: Not quite yet . . . give us a couple . . .

MRS. B: O . . . kay, drinks'll be here in just a sec.

MARY: Why don't I feel like this is funny? Being out with you, I mean. When we don't really know . . . haven't ever really talked. Before today, that is.

MANNY: You think it's funny?

MARY: Well, when I first saw you at that softball game I thought you were pretty silly. But you know how when you see somebody and you think they are silly or goofy and you say, "Boy, I hope I am never stuck with him . . . or her."

MANNY: Yeah.

MARY: I didn't feel that way.

MANNY: Scared me. Well, maybe you need somebody . . . silly, goofy.

MARY: Maybe so. I think so. But even though I felt like you weren't dangerous or anything . . . I didn't dare talk to you. Something was happening.

MRS. A enters with drinks, hands them imperiously to MRS. B.

MANNY: Sort of the same here. A simple thing. I'd see you walking in the corridor or somewhere, and I just really wanted to be walking along next to you. Like I had this vision of us side by side. But I was embarrassed to ask anybody about you because . . .

They lean close again. MRS. B butts in.

MRS. B: Here you are! For the gentleman a tall sparkling ginger ale with crushed ice, just as he likes it. And for the female person with a little bit stringy hair who doesn't admit she wears glasses . . . this.

MANNY AND MARY: (*Wrapped up in each other.*) Thanks.

MRS. B: Any time you want to give me your . . . request . . .

MANNY AND MARY: Okay.

MANNY: We really should order. Here. (*Hands her a menu.*) See anything you like?

MARY: Mmmmm! I like that hot and sour soup for two. It kind of makes your lips tingle. And it feels so good as it goes down.

MANNY: Is that the one with the kind of tender but crunchy pieces that sort of melt in your mouth?

MARY: Mmm, yeah.

MANNY: Let's have some of that.

MRS. B: (*From a distance.*) Sour always gives you sinus and hot always makes your nose run.

MANNY: What else? How about this beef with broccoli in black bean sauce.

MRS. B: (*Aside.*) You hate broccoli and beans give you gas.

MARY: Is that hot?

MANNY: Maybe a little . . . pungent.

MARY: Mmmm! I remember . . . It has that nice salty taste after you eat the beef.

MRS. A: (*Stepping in suddenly.*) Is everything all right?

MARY: Just fine. We are still ordering.

MRS. A: That's funny. I could have sworn she was toying with her food.

MANNY: One more. Okay. Though everything looks so good.

MARY: How about the General Tso's chicken. It's got all those great vegetables and I think it's really hot. Excuse me, is this dish really hot?

MRS. B: I definitely think this dish is too hot for the young gentleman. He would prefer the chicken home style. Isn't that right, young man?

MANNY: No. Tonight we are eating out. So let's go for it.

MRS. B: Don't say I didn't warn you.

MANNY: Should I be worried?

MARY: I don't think so. I've never seen an ambulance take anybody away for eating a hot dish. *(Pause.)*

MRS. B: O . . . kay. Soup, beef and chicken. Will there be anything else?

MANNY and MARY are wrapped up in each other. They shake their heads.

MRS. B: Soup'll be right out.

MRS. A and MRS. B withdraw.

MANNY: So. We are going to be working together. *(MARY nods.)*
Planning . . . and things.

MARY: I think you'll like it. The district managers are a pretty good group. A little crazy, some of us. But we do alright.

MANNY: You think I'll fit in? I mean . . . ?

MARY: Like a glove. We're all pretty regular people . . . except for Rocky . . . Colavito. He's pretty special. *(She muses.)*

MANNY: You've been . . . like . . . seeing him?

MARY: *(Whoops.)* Him? Rocky? Naw. Rocky's a nut case. I don't get why he's still on staff. He must have someone important high up and an assistant who does all his work. He brings an invisible friend to meetings.

MANNY: Wow! That's weird . . . But then you're not dating . . .

MARY: Not him . . . or anyone really seriously . . . right now.

MANNY: And you think . . . maybe . . . dating somebody in the company is a problem?

MARY: *(She thinks.)* No. Not at all . . . if they're . . .

As MARY leans toward MANNY, MRS. B swoops in with the soup.

MRS. B: Hot and sour soup!

Spills the soup on MARY.

MRS. B: Oh, excuse me, miss. I didn't mean to splash. Let me wipe that off.

MARY: No. That's okay. That's okay . . .

MRS. B: No trouble. I'll have it cleaned up in a jiffy . . .

MRS. B starts away but stops as MANNY picks up his spoon. She clears her throat. Looks at her. She mimics spreading a napkin on her lap. MANNY frowns. She gestures again.

MANNY: What?

MRS. B: *(Whisper.)* Napkin! Napkin!

MANNY: Oh. Sure. Thanks. Talk about strange people.

MARY takes a sip and winces, her mouth in an O.

MARY: Ooh! Ooh! Ooh ooh, that is hot!

MANNY: *(His lips pursed as for a kiss.)* And sour too! *(They take another taste.)* But good!

MARY: Mmmm, good!

They turn toward each other, lips pursed. MRS. B bursts in with the towel and starts scrubbing MARY's front.

MARY: Okay, okay. Thank you. That's fine.

MRS. B: The soups all right? Or shall I take it away?

MARY: It's fine now. It stung a little at first. But now we are getting used to it. In fact, I think we both like it. Right, Manny?

MANNY: *(With his mouth full.)* A lot!

MRS. B glares at him as she leaves.

MARY: I didn't want to disappoint her. But it is a little filling for me. Maybe I'll save my appetite for the main dishes. You want to finish mine?

MANNY: Sure.

MRS. A surges up with the main courses.

MRS. A: All right. Who gets the beef with broccoli and who gets the General Tso's?

MARY: Well . . . I thought you . . . I thought we . . . would share both of them. Isn't that what people do . . . here?

MRS. A: Some people do, yes. Some do not. After all, this is America. You get to choose. Some make a wise choice as to whom they wish to share their . . . dishes. And some do not. Is that clear?

MANNY AND MARY: Perfectly.

MRS. A: Dig in and bon appétit.

MANNY: Uh, miss?

MRS. A: Yes?

MANNY: Could we have some chopsticks?

MRS. A: Yes, of course. Here you are. Good luck. (*Aside.*) At least he won't be eating with his fingers, as usual.

MANNY: I beg your pardon?

MRS. A: Nothing. Nothing. Enjoy your meal.

MANNY: Thanks.

MANNY struggles with the chopsticks. MARY eats. She notices him.

MARY: Oh. I figured you knew. Actually, it's easier than it looks. (*She takes his hand.*) You kind of lay this one against your thumb, like this, right? And press it there with your third finger.

MANNY: That feels right.

MARY: You hold the other one on top like this. Then you can swing them apart or squeeze them together. Okay? Got it?

MANNY: Got it. (*Mesmerized by her hands touching his.*) Hey, that's nice. That's almost easy.

MARY: Right. So try, go ahead. Only don't try to pinch things, so much as gently lift them up, like it was a fork with two points.

They kiss.

MANNY: Hey, thanks . . .

MARY: S'nothing.

MANNY: Anyway. I liked the lesson.

They eat.

MARY: See. Don't you like this?

MANNY: I do. I do a lot.

MARY: I mean the way we can share. You can even reach right into the same dish when I do and our chopsticks touch. It's such a, such . . .

MRS. B: (*Aside.*) Bad manners! (*Over-sweet.*) Is everything to your liking?

MANNY: (*Gasping a bit.*) S'fine. Fine.

MRS. B: (*Deliberately.*) The chicken's not too hot for you?

MANNY: Pretty hot. Maybe some water would be good.

MRS. B: Sorry, we're all out of water.

MANNY: Maybe some more ginger ale then, thanks.

MRS. B: I told you so.

MANNY: Excuse me?

MRS. B: Coming right up.

MANNY: You know, I haven't been living at home for what, maybe seven years. But sometimes I get this funny feeling I'm still a kid, like my mother was following me around, trying to make sure I don't get into trouble. D'you ever get feelings like that?

MRS. A moves in closer, almost standing over MARY.

MARY: Like she was kind of camped out behind your left ear, ready to have a conniption fit the minute you mess up?

MANNY: Yeah, something like that.

MARY: Well, I've had to do a lot of growing up on my own since I left home. Y'see, my mother was all over me when I was a kid with the lessons and the parties inviting just the right kids . . .

MANNY: That sounds kind of neat.

MARY: Oh, I was spoiled all right. But it wasn't till I got out of the nest that I realized she was really not doing that stuff for me at all. She was doing it for herself. I was like the most important thing she owned that she could show off to everybody.

MANNY: Wow. That's kind of sad.

MRS. A is snuffling into her towel.

MARY: *(To MRS. A.)* Excuse me? Do you want something?

MRS. A: No, no. I was just trying to be helpful. But . . . I know when I'm not needed.

MRS. A withdraws.

MARY: It really wasn't so bad. She started out so poor. She had real high ambitions in a time before a woman could have a big career. So I did what she wanted to do. But you know what?

MANNY: What?

MARY: I'm glad I did. I went to a good college. Got a good job. I feel good about myself. And someday pretty soon I'll get a good . . .

MRS. B: Ginger ale. You see anything else you want?

MANNY: What do you think, Mary? You want dessert?

MARY: No, I'm watching my figure.

MRS. B: Don't say it.

MANNY: I won't say it . . .

MARY: You're sweet.

MRS. B: Do you want something more?

MANNY: Naw. Just the check. *(To MARY.)*

MRS. B: You want to take that home with you?

MANNY: Sure we do. Maybe we could have it for lunch tomorrow.

MARY: Maybe. What about your mom, Manny? I bet she was a doll.

MANNY: Well, she spoiled me, too. But it was different. I was the youngest of eight. So I never stopped being the baby. She was always chasing me around, feeding me till I looked like Humpty Dumpty. Talking goo goo. My brothers got to be men. I was always little baby Manny.

MARY: But that can be nice.

MANNY: Oh. Sure. She's always feeding me, giving me little things, a pair of gloves when it gets cold, fruit, soap . . .

MARY: Sounds like a hard act to follow.

MANNY: Maybe. I love her a lot. But sometimes she . . . smothers a little bit. At some point, you have to let go.

MRS. B presents the check and doggie bag with a sniffle.

MANNY: Are you okay, ma'am?

MRS. B: Lots of onions in that last dish I served.

MARY: I'm sorry. Hope you feel better.

MANNY: Well, thanks ladies, great dinner. Compliments to the chef.

MRS. A: I'll tell her. Here, have your cookies.

MANNY AND MARY: Thanks.

MARY: I insist on fifty-fifty. Absolutely insist. Don't object. It's my way of telling myself I'm on my own. Okay, pick one.

MANNY: *(Takes a cookie.)* So what does yours say?

MRS. A: Watch out for short, sloppy men.

MARY: It says, "Care for others as much as you care for yourself." I'll have to think about that one. And yours?

MRS. B: Watch out for stray cats.

MANNY: "If you love your work, you will go far." Hey, that's cute. *(They exchange and read.)* So whadda we do now? Do you want to call it a night? It's been a long day.

Both mothers nod enthusiastically.

MARY: Not really.

MANNY: You want to go dancing?

Both mothers shrug.

MARY: Mmmm, not really.

MANNY: Maybe just a little drink and some dessert?

Both mothers shake heads lightly.

MARY: Nah, I'm not much of a drinker, and I go easy on the sweet stuff.

MANNY: Well, then, we . . . we could go . . . back to my place . . . *(Both mothers shake heads frantically.)* and listen to some music. You like classic blues?



GREEN ROOM PRESS

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from:

MOTHER IN MY HEAD - FULL LENGTH

by Christopher King.

*For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script,
please contact us at:*

GREEN ROOM PRESS, INC.

customerservice@greenroompress.com

www.greenroompress.com