

YOGA WARRIORS

By

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YOGA WARRIORS

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Should you wish to perform YOGA WARRIORS,
the music is available at katherineburkman@gmail.com

American Yogi Productions, in conjunction with Women at Play presented the world premiere of YOGA WARRIORS at The Columbus Dance Theatre, 592 East Main Street, Columbus, Ohio in April of 2007. The production was directed by Katherine Burkman, assisted by Augustin Nieves, Stage Manager and Properties. Lighting Design by Zach Wright, sound by David Wallingford. The actors were Richard Esquinas as Phil, the Yoga Teacher, Deborah Burkman as Rodica, Marten Carlson as Jo, Susie Gerald as Mona, Ann Gazelle as Daisy (with her dog, Carla), Kathleen Gorman as Kate, Elizabeth Hansen as Joan, Emily Bach as Judi and Richard Napoli as Chase.

Comment about the production: Allan Woods, Professor of Theatre at The Ohio State University wrote: "Very funny sections, the script walked the thin line between making fun of some of the pretentiousness of people obsessed with a particular form of exercise and respect for the life style that the form makes possible."

A scene from Yoga Warriors between Joan and Judi was published in Duo: The Best Scenes for Two for the 21st Century, Ed. Joyce E. Henry, Rebecca Dunn Jaroff, and Bob Shuman. New York: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2009: 302-304.

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CAST

PHIL:	A yoga instructor, mostly present as a voice
JOAN:	In her 30s, new to yoga
JUDI:	In her 30s, proficient at yoga
RADICA:	In her 30s, a yoga teacher
JOE:	In his 30s, Radica's boyfriend
CHASE:	In his 40s, interested in DAISY.
DAISY:	In her 40s, accompanied by her Guide Dog, Darla
MONA:	In her fifties or sixties
KATE:	Generally silent

(Because Kate only has one line at the end, she could be easily dropped from the cast. An alternative ending would keep Phil as a voice only—he could be greeted by the ensemble with a Namaste to end the play. Hence the play may be done with either 7, 8, or 9 characters. As a teacher of yoga, Radica would need to be at a high level of her practice, but the others could range from beginners to medium levels of achievement. The actress who plays Daisy may or may not actually be blind. The play may be performed in a theatre or as a site-specific piece in a yoga studio or large room that could be a yoga studio.)

TIME: The time is now. In fact, in the moment.

PLACE: A yoga retreat. The characters move on a fluid stage from yoga class to the woods to a hot tub to a meditation room to a bedroom. Properties and words designate the place. Blocks may be used as well for place (3 suggesting a tree, 2 a bench, 6 a bed, etc.). The cast would move the blocks about. Slides of the Indian God Ganesh (part elephant) may be projected during the first song in Act 1 and slides of a turning globe may be projected during the second song, which begins Act 2, or not. Yoga music or a live player (one of the characters) could play a Shrewdi and chant (an Indian instrument) during scene changes.

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

The ensemble is rolling out their mats and warming up as the audience enters. They freeze as the voice of PHIL addresses the audience.

PHIL'S VOICE. Ladies and gentlemen, may I ask you to please rise.
(*Pause.*)

Yes, you the audience. I am speaking to you. (*Pause, to allow the audience to stand.*) In yoga we come to practice, we come to be vital, and we come with no expectations. Now, take a deep breath in. Exhale right to your heels. Again, long breath in, a long breath out, to your heels. Witness how the mind calms, like a bay in the ocean. You may sit down. (*Pause to allow the audience to sit.*) You are about to take a journey that will not be without struggle—as yoga warriors, you must sharpen your spiritual swords. Remember, however, that your greatest weapon and most intimate friend is your breath. You are now ready for the experience of the yoga warrior. Namaste.

SCENE 2

The ensemble is on yoga mats. RADICA sits on a block DSR with her guitar. She summons Joe to join her. As she sings the Yoga song to the audience, with JOE joining in, the rest doing the refrain, the ensemble takes the poses she mentions, such as Mountain Pose, Warrior 1 and 2 and Tree pose. This may be a choreographed dance.

RADICA.

OM NAMA SHIVA

OM NAMA SHIVA

OM NAMA SHIVA

I LOVE MY YOGA

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I WENT TO INDIA
SEARCHING FOR A GURU
HOPING TO SEE WHAT WAS INSIDE OF ME

(REFRAIN: OM NAMA SHIVA)

WHEN I ASKED MY GURU
SHOULD THIS HURT, WILL I MEND
MY BONE POKING OUT OF MY SIDE?
HE SAID, "PERHAPS IT'S BEST TO LOOK INSIDE."

NOW MOUNTAIN POSE
5000 YEAR-OLD MOUNTAIN
STANDING TALL AND STRONG
I'M LIKE SIDDHARTHA WITH CONVICTION,
STAYING UP ALL NIGHT LONG

GET OUT OF MY WAY
THERE'S NOTHING I CAN'T DO
WARRIOR ONE
AND WARRIOR TWO

WHEN I'M DOWN
JUST NEED A LITTLE MORE OXYGEN
TO SOAR AND BE FREE
I THINK I'M MOST HAPPY WHEN I'M BEING A TREE

THEY TWISTED ME ROUND
TURNED ME INSIDE OUT
PUT ME ON MY HEAD
I HAD A GOOD CRY
TEARS DROPPING LIKE RAIN INTO MY *CHAI*

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ROOTED TO THE GROUND
MY ARMS ARE LIKE EAGLES
MY ARMS ARE LIKE RIVERS FLOWING FROM MY HEART
STARTING IN DARKNESS

I RAISE MY ARMS TO THE LIGHT
SALUTING THE SUN AS IT RISES
IF I LISTEN CLOSE ENOUGH
IF I OPEN THE EAR OF MY EAR
IF I OPEN THE HEART OF MY HEART
MAYBE I CAN SEE
MAYBE I CAN HEAR
MAYBE I CAN FEEL THROUGH THE MOTION
THAT WE'RE ALL PART OF THE SAME,
PART OF THE SAME
PART OF THE SAME. . . OCEAN

OM NAMA SHIVA

OM NAMA SHIVA

OM NAMA SHIVA

I LOVE MY YOGA (*Radica and Joe kiss. She gives her guitar to Joe and says the following to the audience. The class sits cross-legged on their mats, not hearing.*)

RADICA. I'm dreaming again. I don't know what happened, but I haven't dreamt in a year, maybe two. (*Pause.*) It's been like a desert. No water. No vegetation. Just numbness. A perpetual crick in the neck. (*She stands.*) Then someone threw me a lifeline in the desert, and I started yoga. It's been a few years now and I've actually become a yoga teacher. Not here. I'm just on this retreat to learn more. And I've been feeling good. Still in the desert, but there's some water. (*Pause.*) And last night I had the most amazing dream. In my dream someone told me about this yoga school. It turned out that we had to take a boat to the spa, which was actually a little bit like Venice and a little bit like this place, a building on water. I entered,

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and there were exotic fragrances, fruits, and flowers. And there was swimming, lots of swimming. People wore lush garments in crimson, purple, and deep, deep blues. (*Pause.*) Some people were golden, literally glowing, serene, content, at peace. Their hearts had been opened. Wow, how great, I thought, but I found out there was a downside. (*Steps forward.*) First they could remember how their hearts were opened. And second, they were so loving that they had to be guided by caretakers. Otherwise, they would stop and give everyone long, meaningful and healing hugs. (*Pause.*) I wondered if I would make the choice. Could I go through the “heart opening” and not know how it had happened? (*Pause.*) It’s great to dream again. (*She takes her place on a mat in the class.*)

SCENE 3

Two young women in a large yoga class sit with legs crossed. The other characters, except Phil, are sitting there too, behind them. The women speak in stage whispers at first, but once the convention is established they use regular voices. The class moves from yoga pose to yoga pose as the voice over announces them. JUDI is accomplished, but JOAN struggles with each pose. There is soothing music playing under the words.

PHIL’S VOICE. Right thumb on right nostril. Then through the left nostril, exhale gently. In through the left nostril, hold, exhale. Long exhale.

JOAN. How the hell can I exhale if I haven’t inhaled?

JUDI. Give it a chance, Joan.

PHIL’S VOICE. Inhale. Now with the thumb and index finger, hold. Exhale.

JOAN. My nose is running.

JUDI. Here’s a Kleenex. Mine always runs too, but breathing is good.

JOAN. Well, I always thought so. (*Blows nose loudly.*)

PHIL’S VOICE. *Prana* means life force. *Yama* means restraint or control. It’s never too late to do *Pranayama*.

JOAN. I think it may be too late for me.

PHIL’S VOICE. And now, self-massage. With the right arm extended, come up the right arm and down the right arm. Get that blood flowing.

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JOAN. (*Massaging her arm.*) That feels good.

JUDI. I tell you, you'll be a new woman, Joan. But you have to be quiet and focus.

JOAN. Are you a new woman, Judi? All you do is yoga and complain about George.

JUDI. I was going to tell you after class. He's gone.

PHIL'S VOICE. On your feet, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to yoga. We come to practice. Now, Warrior Pose Two. Place your feet approximately four feet apart. Arms extended above the head. Knee over the heel. With energy coming from both arms, push in opposite directions. Abide in the pose. Good.

JOAN. (*Struggling into the pose.*) Gone. What do you mean?

JUDI. (*Gets into pose.*) Packed up his DVDs and his laptop and moved out. Said we were not compatible. And that I was too fat.

PHIL'S VOICE. Other side. Reverse pivot. Knee over the heel. Good.

JOAN. You are not too fat. That's absurd.

JUDI. Well, fat, too fat. What's the difference?

PHIL'S VOICE. Warriors are archetypes that represent courage and strength. With this glorious pose, you will be strong, confident, ready to face the world, ready to do battle for righteousness.

JOAN. The creep.

JUDI. No, I'm facing it. I'm. . . distanced from it. I'm not taking it personally. I'm a. . . warrior.

PHIL'S VOICE. Hold the pose. Put your awareness on the power of the breath.

JOAN. Not taking it personally! Judi, I understand your need to deny your feelings, but maybe it would be better to unleash the fury. I know I would.

JUDI. This is your first yoga class, Joan. And you're actually doing incredibly well. But believe it or not, I'm not repressing my feelings. I'm just in a different place. I can see his failings. And mine. But I'm doing something about it. (*Sees Phil approaching.*) Oops, here comes Phil. He always does a lot of adjustments on new people. (*Pause.*) Nope, I guess he's going to someone else.

JOAN. Wow. He can adjust me any time.

JUDI. Yes, all the women in the class have a crush on him. Some of the

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men too, I bet. Of course, I read in some magazine that everyone is in love with his or her yoga teacher.

PHIL'S VOICE. Now, let's do Sun Salutation. Hands together in prayer pose. Push away the loud thoughts. Stretch, stretch up high. Now bend over and grab your ankles, or whatever you can grab.

JOAN. As long as it's whatever I can grab. (*She grabs her shins.*) Judi, I'm not a spiritual person. I can't be your kind of warrior. If Jack walked out on me, I'd. . . I'd kill him. And I suspect that's not a yoga warrior move.

JUDI. What? Is Jack making noises about moving out?

JOAN. I said 'If'.

JUDI. But you said it in a funny tone of voice.

JOAN. It's all that breathing. It's made me sound funny. Over oxygenized.

PHIL'S VOICE. Now Downward Facing Dog. That's it. Palms are flush. Spread your fingers. Tuck your tail bone. Breathe. Good.

JOAN. Upward Dog, Downward Dog. What's all this dog stuff?

JUDI. Shhh, Joan, those people are looking at us. You're not supposed to talk when you do yoga!

JOAN. I have this terrible temptation to lift my leg and urinate. It's yogic, I'm sure. I'm just being one with the dog in me.

JUDI. I'm sorry I invited you to the retreat. I won't let you make fun of it. It's important to me.

PHIL'S VOICE. Now, we will assume Fish Pose. Hands downward, under your bodies. . . not too far under. Up on your elbows. Arch. Neck back. Farther back. Let your head go.

JOAN. This is easy. But I have this awful vision of people letting their heads go. I see heads rolling around the room.

JUDI. You have to arch your back more. Now it's not so easy, is it? That would be quite a coincidence, Jack moving out too.

JOAN. No.

JUDI. 'No,' it's still easy. Or 'no,' I'm all wet about Jack?

PHIL'S VOICE. Single Knee Squeeze. Clasp your right knee. Bring it to you. Flex your feet.

JOAN. We have some problems. That's all. But if I come home as a fish, maybe that will change things. I like this pose. I like being a fish.

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JUDI. What kind of problems?

PHIL'S VOICE. Other knee.

JOAN. He didn't want me to come to this retreat. He actually doesn't want me to go anywhere much without him. And he doesn't like to go anywhere much. And when I stay home, he just goes to his little attic closet and does I don't know what. So, I don't know why he wants me home. But he does. Maybe now that I'm a fish he can put me in a bowl and watch me swim.

PHIL'S VOICE. Let your shoulders raise your head. Bring it to your chest. Elbows fly!

JOAN. I'm not sure I love him anymore.

JUDI. You don't need to. He's your husband. And I need you and Jack to be happily married.

PHIL'S VOICE. Excellent. Now for the Shoulder Stand. (*Judi gets into the pose.*)

JOAN. Oh, no. I can't do that, Judi.

JUDI. Sure you can. Nothing to it. But don't talk. I have to take a lot of little breaths.

JOAN. (*Trying to get her legs up in air.*) I can't get up.

JUDI. Try rolling. See, I'll show you. (*She shows Joan, who manages to get into stand.*)

JOAN. Who would have thunk it! Wow. I'm up here.

JUDI. Sure, you're good. It's hard for me because I'm fat, but it should be easy for you.

JOAN. You're not fat. First, I'm a fish and now I'm upside down. Not a bad day's work.

JUDI. While you're up there, I'm going to tell you something.

JOAN. Something that will make me come crashing down? Talk fast 'cause I can't last much longer up here.

JUDI. Joan, I want you to have a baby for me.

JOAN. (*She comes out of shoulder stand with a plunk. So do the rest of the group who have been listening and shushing them all along.*) Judi! In the middle of a shoulder stand?

JUDI. No. When next you and Jack, you know. . .

JOAN. Would you please get out of that position and talk to me.

JUDI. (*Coming out of shoulder stand. They sit and talk.*) I didn't want to

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have George's baby anyhow, so he did me a favor by leaving. But I do want a baby. So, I thought since we're such good friends, you might consider having one and giving it to me.

PHIL'S VOICE. Now, Sage Twist. Tuck your left leg under your right. Now pull your arm around you. Yes. And twist back gently. Lengthen your spine. Let your eyes go back as far as they can go. You need to twist your way deep into your center, your *Svarupa*, your true essence. Twist your way to bliss. (*The class laugh at this as they try to twist.*)

JUDI. (*Gets into position.*) Don't just sit there, Joan. Try it.

PHIL'S VOICE. Other side.

JOAN. Try what! Sage Twist? Pure bliss? Or produce a child? Not such a sage twist in my book.

JUDI. Well, you don't seem to want one, and you're in excellent health, and you have a man, when he's not in the attic, so what's the big deal?

JOAN. What makes you think that Jack would be interested in fathering a child, for you that is?

JUDI. It's all the yoga, Joan. It's just made me so calm that I think if we approached him in the right way, he would consider it.

JOAN. And what way might that be? The right one I mean?

JUDI. Just calmly, rationally, quietly, I don't know. Just ask him, I guess. If he says no, fine.

JOAN. And do I have a say? Can't I say no? I like babies. What makes you think that if I had one, I'd give it to you?

JUDI. Because you could have another for yourself. I need one now.

PHIL'S VOICE. On your tummies.

JOAN. Our tummies. Why do I suddenly feel that I'm in kindergarten? How's about you adopt me, Judi? I'd be much less trouble than a real baby.

PHIL'S VOICE. Half Locust to Full Locust. Be brave. Breathe. In through the nose, out through the nose. Right leg up and down. Good. Left leg up and down. Now my yoga warriors, Full Locust; with great courage, visualize your spine. See the lower back curling, curling, forehead to the mat, up, up, up we come, both legs, a little more. Now slowly, down we come.

JOAN. He's got to be kidding. I can't get them off the floor.

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JUDI. It'll come. Be patient.

JOAN. You don't need to ask me to do this, Judi. You can get artificially inseminated. I mean, it's not like trying out yoga for heaven's sake. It would affect my relationship with Jack. It would affect my body. It would affect our relationship.

JUDI. Afraid of change? Afraid of true generosity of spirit? Afraid to get your legs up in the air? Just visualize and they'll come up. (*Judi shows her.*)

JOAN. I'm visualizing, I'm visualizing. They're not coming up. And I'm not having a baby. (*Pause.*) Is that why you wanted me to come to this retreat with you? So, I could learn how to breathe? I mean you have to do special breathing when you have a baby. And it probably helps to keep calm. Aren't there special yoga classes for pregnant women?

PHIL'S VOICE. Get ready for Cobra. Place your hands by your chest, heads back. Deep breath in, long breath out. Hang on, cause we're going to do *Himasina*, Lion Pose. Mouths open everybody. Tongues out. Let it out. (*Ensemble does lion sound with Phil, three times.*)

JOAN. (*Also makes lion sound.*) That's my response. You do know, don't you that this whole idea is. . . is just silly. It's like a bad joke. Are you planning to have us appear on Oprah?

JUDI. No! Joan, just think Japanese. When a woman in Japan can't have a baby, she doesn't go to a fertility clinic. She goes to her sister. And her sister has the baby for her. And she gives it to her. I think of you as a sister.

JOAN. But you *can* have a baby.

JUDI. Not without a man I love. And he's just not around yet. I need a baby now.

PHIL'S VOICE. Now, everyone into Child's Pose. That's it. Stretch out your backs. Lengthen the arms. Settle the hips.

JOAN. Am I doing it right? Why does it look so easy when you do it? You look like you're resting and I feel as if I'm getting ready to give birth.

JUDI. See, you're getting ready.

JOAN. I'm getting ready to turn into a child, not to have one. This is a pose, not a position for delivery.

JUDI. I want your baby.

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JOAN. That sounds like something a man says to a woman just before he proposes.

JUDI. Well, it would sort of be our baby. We'll always be close. You'll always be her aunt.

JOAN. It's going to be a girl?

JUDI. Of course, it's going to be a girl.

JOAN. I can't believe we're talking about this seriously. It's only my first class.

JUDI. I can't wait. Shhh. Here comes Phil.

JOAN. Oh, Judi, here he comes. Oh goodness. He's going to adjust me. He's going to make me surrender, have your baby, have a gorgeous baby girl and just give it to you, just like that. And I'll be Aunt Joan. My breathing will be perfect, in through the nose, out through the nose. I'm an upward facing dog with a lion's head who's going to give you my baby. Here he comes. Here he comes! (*Music soars and lights out on Judi and Joan.*)

SCENE 4

A beautiful woods. DAISY alone on a block with DARLA, her guide dog.

DAISY. Well, Darla, what do you think? Is it as beautiful here as I imagine? I hear water dripping. A waterfall perhaps? I hear leaves swishing, birds singing. I know it must be lovely. Now, I must compose myself. I think Phil is taking a walk and he'll surely come this way. (*Turns to audience as if Phil is in it.*) Phil? Phil, I want you to know how much your yoga classes mean to me. And this retreat. I walk into your classes with my mind racing one hundred miles an hour, and I actually find I can lose my mind within three minutes after the class begins. (*Pause.*) No, I don't mean I lose my mind. I just lose my mind's stuff. I breathe out my crazy, mixed-up life and breathe in peace and relaxation. And believe me, Phil, it doesn't happen at home. I do my yoga daily, sometimes listening to your tape, sometimes just doing the moves. But it isn't the same. For one thing, I have this odd feeling that Darla is laughing at me. This basically serious animal is laughing at me. And that makes me question what I'm

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doing. On the other hand, Phil, it's your presence that is so helpful. You take us through the breathing, the moves; you give us our energy.

(Pause.) I did notice that you sounded depressed this morning before class started. I hope everything's okay. I mean it's a little like you don't want your doctor to be sick or your psychologist to have terrible family problems. You don't want your yoga teacher to be depressed. I know you're human just like the rest of us, but I reserve the right to any depression that's floating around. I claim it. It's all mine. *(Pause.)* Phil, I've been meaning to ask you something for a long time. When you do yoga, do you go to a place of utter peace? Do you become one with the universe? *Namaste? Shanti? Nirvana? Kalvala?* One of those things? Because I guess I haven't gotten there yet. And believe me I try. I'm very tired of self, self, self. I'm very willing to let myself merge with something larger. But I just don't quite get it. Or get there. Well, what's that like? And do you always get there? Or just sometimes? Or not at all? *(Pause.)* I know those are really big questions. I mean, I could certainly ask you little ones about what you eat for breakfast or whether you wear socks to bed. *(Pause.)* But what I most want to know is about the meaning of life. Are you on to it? The meaning of life? Is it something you can share? I mean, in your classes, I feel as if I'm maybe in the presence of the meaning of life, but it may just be the nice music and the quiet. *(Pause.)* Well, Darla, I think I've thought of everything I want to ask Phil. Oh my God, here he comes. The time is right. The time is here. The time is now. Ask! *(Daisy and Darla exit. Joan and Judi enter from the opposite side on a hike.)*

JOAN. Look at those birds. I just love listening to the sounds in this place.

JUDI. Slow down a little, Joan. I thought I was the one in good shape.

JOAN. Oh, sorry. I'm used to walking really fast. But you're right. If we slow down, we'll take in more of this gorgeous landscape.

JUDI. And meditate. If we stop talking, we can walk and meditate at the same time.

JOAN. I've *been* meditating, Judi. A lot. And I've come to a decision.

JUDI. A decision about what?

JOAN. I hope you'll understand, Judi. *(Pause.)* I've decided to keep the baby.

JUDI. *(Aghast.)* My baby!

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JOAN. No, actually, my baby.

JUDI. But Joan, you agreed. You all but signed in blood. You made me feel that I was a new woman.

JOAN. I know, and believe me, I'm sorry, Judi. And anyway, I can't believe Jack would have agreed. And this way, he'll never know. A baby may be just what this marriage needs.

JUDI. Never know what! Joan, I'm way out of breath. Let's sit here under this tree and. . . bring you to your senses. (*They sit.*)

JOAN. No, no, Judi, I was out of my mind, lost my senses and now I've found them. I do have to thank you. I feel a hundred times better than before we came here. I don't know if I can explain what happened.

JUDI. Well, you'd better begin trying. You can't just go keeping my baby without some major explanation. I'm devastated.

JOAN. If it were just me and Jack doing you a big favor, and we could be around as aunt and uncle, I might have considered it. I did consider it, didn't I? I sort of agreed. Right after Phil adjusted me?

JUDI. Sort of? I thought you did agree.

JOAN. You see, I thought that when Phil finally adjusted me, that I would have not only a new body but also a new generosity of spirit—I truly thought I could do this for you, crazy as it seems, seemed to me. But Judy, here we are on the fourth day of the retreat and something happens when he makes those adjustments in class.

JUDI. Tell me about it.

JOAN. I'm trying to, but you won't listen.

JUDI. I'm listening.

JOAN. It's hard to explain.

JUDI. Try.

JOAN. Judi, I know I will have a baby, but he's the father.

JUDI. He? Who?

JOAN. Phil.

JUDI. Oh, Joan, don't be absurd. He has a girlfriend.

JOAN. I don't mean physically, Judi. I mean spiritually. The spiritual father.

JUDI. You've been telling me for years just how unspiritual you are. You always make fun of me when I talk about my "inner child" or my

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communing with nature. Now, here you are hiking like a . . . like a disciple of Carl Jung, and you plan to keep my baby because of some supposed spiritual connection you made with a man you don't know outside of a few adjustments in a dumb yoga class.

JOAN. Dumb?

JUDI. Well, ever since you started mooning over Phil, I've kinda had a chance to pull back. And he's just a guy, you know. And you, I hardly recognize you. You have no idea what it's like to lose a baby, Joan. It just makes me want to walk over to that cliff and jump right over. (*Gets up as if to do it.*)

JOAN. (*Pulling her back down.*) Now settle down, Judi. No need to get drastic here. It's just that the adjustment wasn't what I thought it would be.

JUDI. For heaven's sake, Joan, all he did was adjust your back in Child Pose. How does that make him the spiritual father of your unborn child?

JOAN. Ah, that's it. I've never had my back adjusted before. I've never had the flexibility I've been developing the last few days. I've never been so aware of what my body can do. I've never thought about birth in this way. Judi, I can breathe. I was dead. I just didn't know it. And believe me, I'll always be grateful to you. You can be the baby's God Parent. His spiritual adviser.

JUDI. Joan, my baby is a girl. Don't you remember?

JOAN. No, I don't think so, Judi. I think this is a boy baby.

JUDI. May I remind you, Joan, that you're not even pregnant yet?

JOAN. I know, but in a sense I am. I just can't tell you how...enabled I feel.

JUDI. That's because we're on a retreat in beautiful surroundings and you have no responsibilities and everything's unreal. Believe me, I've been on these retreats before. When you get back, you'll be just where you were before you came and when you think about having this baby *boy*, you'll start thinking diapers, babysitters, end of freedom. Trust me.

JOAN. Then why do you come on retreats if what they give you melts away when you get home? Maybe I've been the spiritual one all these years and you've just been faking it, nibbling away at spirituality but not taking any real bites, not letting your yoga practice feed your soul.

JUDI. How dare you! I'm just fighting for my little girl here. (*She begins*

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to cry.)

JOAN. *(Also crying.)* And I'm fighting for my little boy! *(Shift focus of light to Daisy, who walks on and is talking to Darla.)*

DAISY. I couldn't ask him, Darla. When I had the best and perhaps only opportunity to ask him what happens to him in class, I couldn't get out a single word.

CHASE. *(Entering quietly.)* Hi, Daisy. Talking to yourself?

DAISY. *(Recognizing his voice.)* No, Chase. Although I do that sometimes. I'm talking to Darla.

CHASE. Hi, Darla. *(He goes to pet her.)*

DAISY. Don't pet her. She's working.

CHASE. *(Stung.)* Alright, alright. I always forget. *(Sits next to her on a block.)*

DAISY. I heard you had a private with Phil this morning. What was that like?

CHASE. He explained some things I hadn't understood very well. It was quite extraordinary.

DAISY. I wonder if he'd meet with me. Chase, tell me something. Do I do the *asanas* correctly. I know Phil spends quite a bit of time adjusting me, but I never know if I quite get it. Be honest now.

CHASE. You're very graceful, Daisy. It's a pleasure to watch you move from *asana* to *asana*.

DAISY. You didn't answer my question.

CHASE. Mostly you do the moves that we all do. Sometimes you don't. I happen to think it doesn't matter. We're not here to be correct.

DAISY. But why doesn't Phil adjust me when I'm not correct.

CHASE. Because. . . he probably sees how graceful you are as well. You always look like you're in the moment. Most of us struggle with that.

DAISY. Yes, I can feel the struggle in the room. But I'm not always in the moment. I make lists sometimes.

CHASE. *(He laughs.)* Lists? That's pretty funny. Lists!

DAISY. Not lists like, do the laundry, don't forget to buy orange juice. Lists like,

tomorrow I must really stay in the moment. And I must open my heart wide. I'm not good at that.

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CHASE. Yes, I've noticed. You look angry a lot of the time. But I thought perhaps you were just concentrating.

DAISY. (*With anger, insulted.*) I am not angry all the time!

CHASE. I didn't say all of the time.

DAISY. Oh.

CHASE. Perhaps I could help you.

DAISY. Help me with what?

CHASE. With opening your heart.

DAISY. How could you do that?

CHASE. (*Kisses her gently on the lips.*)

DAISY. Oh, that way. (*Shyly.*) Yes, perhaps you could. (*She stands and puts Darla in leading position. Chase takes her arm.*) Don't do that!

CHASE. What?

DAISY. Take my arm.

CHASE. You don't want me to touch you?

DAISY. (*Calming down.*) No. Do it this way. I'll take your arm.

CHASE. I think I see. (*They move out together.*) But what if I want to hold your hand?

DAISY. I'll have to think about that, Chase. It would take some. . . adjusting.

SCENE 5

Back in the yoga room. JOE is going through yoga motions as he speaks. The ensemble is doing the moves with their backs to the audience. Joe begins with his back to audience but keeps turning to talk with them. He is not very adept at the moves.

JOE. Why did I let Radica persuade me to come? I'm not only out of shape, I can't concentrate. Here I am doing some oddball, Standing A Pose and all I can think about is whether to break up with Rad or to propose marriage. There she is right up front, effortlessly moving from *asana* to *asana*. And I cannot.

PHIL'S VOICE. Chest Expander. Arms out at either side. Invert the hands, arms behind your back, heads back. Sweet pain only. Now, bend

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forward, two eyes on two toes.

JOE. Two eyes on two toes? All I can think about is what to do about Radica and how terrible I am at yoga. Peace. That's what she promised me I would find. You call this peace? (*Pause.*)

PHIL'S VOICE. Warrior One. Strong shoulders. Relax your neck as we breathe in and out through the nose.

JOE. Like I know she wants a big wedding with all the hoopla and expense and neither of our families can afford a big wedding and I don't particularly want to shell out for it myself and she has a modest job teaching yoga and there you are. Why not find a girl who wants to elope? Radica, erotica, *asana*, ass-me that is!

PHIL'S VOICE. Side Stretch. Slide your hands along your thigh.

JOE. I wonder whether Sonia remembered to send out the memo on next week's meeting. If not, her days are numbered, that's for sure. Sonia, begoneya! Except she makes awfully good coffee and I know she needs the job because she's a single mom.

PHIL'S VOICE. Now, get into table pose. We are going to Thread the Needle. Wrist below your shoulder. Knees apart.

JOE. Hey, not too bad if I do say so myself. I could call Sonia to check if we were allowed to have our cell phones here. Obviously being without it hasn't added to my peace of mind. I wish I weren't so honest. I could just have snuck it into my bag and who would know? Just trying to please Rad, I guess. Let the office go. Let everything go. Peace of mind. (*Pause.*)

PHIL'S VOICE. Tree pose. Face the window. We face the trees outside when we do this pose to emulate the trees. Put your right hand on your hip. Raise your left leg and place your foot on your thigh. You will attain a new sense of balance. Breathe, in through the nose, out through the nose.

JOE. (*He fumbles his way into the position.*) Balance. That's what I need to find. Balance. I know I'm obsessive and compulsive and narcissistic, at least that's what Rad always tells me when she's mad, but look, I can balance. I *can* focus! I'm at peace. Wish I could will Rad to turn around and look. (*He falls down, then gets up and tries pose again.*) Whatever.

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SCENE 6

Radica is sitting by herself in a hot tub made of blocks. It is night.

PHIL'S VOICE. Remember the myth of the turtle. Turtles are born with a certain number of breaths. The reason they live so long is that they take slow breaths. *(All but Radica and MONA get into Turtle Pose and then do Rising Turtle in soft light during the following scene.)*

RADICA. *(Takes a few slow breaths.)* I feel like I'm lost on a life raft. *(To audience.)* What I need is a cheerleader. Any volunteers? *(Pause.)* No? Hi, Mona. Will you be my cheerleader?

MONA. *(Joins Radica in tub.)* Me?

RADICA. Yeah.

MONA. Okay.

RADICA. I was just swimming in the pool. It was an extraordinary experience.

MONA. Swimming in the pool?

RADICA. You're supposed to be my cheerleader!

MONA. Sorry. I forgot. Tell me about this extraordinary experience.

RADICA. I've been struggling lately with my weight and I noticed I was only swimming to lose weight and I felt sad. Sad about Iraq too, and all the dead children. And hungry children. And the environment. And. . .

MONA. Sad? Bad. Sad? Bad.

RADICA. Huh?

MONA. I'm cheerleading. Go on.

RADICA. But this time, swimming in the pool I felt weightless, completely connected. I felt each stroke, as though I had never done the stroke before, yet I had done it since the beginning of time. The night came. The darkness above and below. I couldn't tell where the sky began and the water ended. I was the darkness. I was the sky and water.

MONA. I could use some of that weightlessness. I'll go with you next time. You know, I think this retreat is going to be even better than the last one we were on.

RADICA. No, you don't understand. When I got out of the pool, I realized

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I had a glimpse of what life could be like without being so hard on myself. And I felt myself reaching out to those who suffer, I mean really suffer.

PHIL'S VOICE with RADICA. Taoist saying: "The way will teach you the way. Love teaches you how to love."

RADICA. I always think of my mom when I swim. We both love the water. When I was a little girl, I remember playing with her in the ocean and I asked her, "How come we like the water so much, how come?" She said it's where we come from, the ocean; we were fish you know. (*Pause.*) I'm learning to be a turtle.

MONA. Oh wise one, and so young too. Will you teach me to be a turtle?

RADICA. You're a damned good cheerleader.

SCENE 7

Mona is meditating with the ensemble. They all move into lotus position. All but Mona wear yoga clothing. Mona is wearing an oversized tee shirt and baggy sweats. All look serene and calm, but Mona seems anxious, unsure of how to sit, how to behave.

PHIL'S VOICE. Take a minute to find your center before we begin. Close your eyes, and begin to take a deep breath in to the count of 12; then slowly let it out. Good. Now some of you will keep your eyes open as you meditate as many monks do. It's your choice. Remember, if your thoughts or worries take over, return to The Breath. It's all about The Breath. (*We hear a gong ring three times, and the room becomes silent.*)

MONA. (*Still trying to get comfortable, can't manage Lotus position. Looks around and observes everyone else still and centered; this makes her agitation increase. Settles down somewhat in a cross-legged sitting position and takes three deep breaths with eyes closed. A beat. Eyes pop open.*) This is so much harder than yoga; I can't believe it! Not that I can do many of those poses, especially with my bad shoulder. Actually, everything hurts, both shoulders, my back, my hair, but at least I'm *doing* something, so I don't have to think so much. Though if I have to do one more Downward Facing Dog with my fat ass sticking up in the air, I think

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I'll die.

PHIL'S VOICE. Put your attention on the *Mantra*. For us Westerners, this will have a moving effect on the body. It will help create a normal, natural relaxation response.

MONA. My thighs are so tight. Okay, shhhh, get centered. Do the Breath thing. Do the *Mantra* thing. (*Breathes deeply - eyes pop open.*) I know I need to learn to calm down – to quiet the noise in my head and be still sometimes, like my therapist says. But it all seems so time-consuming, and it's a slower process than I thought. And I'm so busy now, with that big project at work due soon. I'm sure that only Tibetan monks get really evolved – what else do they have to do? I'd even consider being one if I could wear those lovely, loose silk robes all the time and never worry about tight waistbands ever again. (*Pause.*) Do I smell like garlic? (*Closes eyes, one short breath. Eyes pop open.*) I liked the meditation introduction on oprah.com much better than this. I love the Emotional Well Being and Spirit link, and the four meditation choices are so nicely packaged. Who could resist Lovingkindness meditation? Of course, I had to try out the eating meditation which I thought I had already mastered. I call it food coma. Then I click, and there's this lovely soothing voice asking me to join her while she guides me with thoughts about being in the moment, breathing and loving myself. I breathe to the somewhat annoying new age music and love myself for three minutes and then it's over. I feel fine, a bit calmer, and hungry. Who knew breathing worked up such an appetite?

PHIL'S VOICE. We welcome thought; the spontaneous flow of words and thoughts are fine. We return to the *Mantra*, not to banish our thoughts, but to go deeper into them, to allow the mind to wander.

MONA. (*She looks around at the group--all seem serene. She may rise and move about the stage.*) Deeper into what? I feel like hours have passed. My butt hurts. I've got a wedgie. I hope I used enough deodorant. How the hell are they doing this-- no one has moved at all and I can't sit still for a minute. They must all be on Valium. I'm the oldest one here, I'm sure. So what, Mother, I don't look that bad. (*Pause.*) In fact, I notice that I haven't heard you taunting me for a while now. I've been working so hard on getting rid of your critical voice. (*Mona assumes her mother's voice.*)

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God you're pathetic. You can't even breathe properly, and what's with that outfit? You probably gained another 10 pounds so you wear that schleppy thing to try to cover it up. Look at Radica over there and all the others. They're shapely, focused, perfect performers. After all the money I put into you—clothes, modeling lessons, hair. What a waste!

PHIL'S VOICE. Quiet the inner voice. Don't dwell on the past. Each time you come to the mat you become a new self.

MONA. Hear that mother? I'm a warrior now and I'm tired of fighting with your voice in my ear. There's plenty to love about me, so get the hell out of here. Crawl back to wherever you came from. I've won the war. . . I think. Well, whatever, I'm declaring victory! (*Mona closes her eyes, assumes meditation pose, smiling softly.*) Okay, let's see. A *mantra*. What can I use as a *mantra*? I know. *Mantra*. That's it. *Mantra, mantra, mantra, mantra, mantra, mantra, mantra, mantra.* (*To audience.*) I think it's working!

SCENE 8

Daisy, Chase, Mona, and Joan are in a hot tub made of five blocks. KATE has her back to the audience and lets her hair dangle over the edge. Daisy and Chase are talking energetically and intimately. Radica approaches.

RADICA. Excuse me. I hope I'm not being too forward, but I've been really working on trusting my intuitive needs and I'm getting the sense that I need to sit there. (*Points to where Chase is sitting.*)

JOAN. Where Chase is sitting?

DAISY. Where Chase is sitting? Your intuition wants him to move so you can sit here?

RADICA. Well, you know Daisy, I've been having this stream of light come from my crown *Chakra*, and I don't want to ignore or disrupt the flow. It's directed me to sit close to you.

DAISY. My throat *chakra* is telling me your crown *chakra* is spinning out of control and is rude, Rad. We're having a conversation and if you want to be included activate some *Satra* and just ask.

RADICA. (*Starts crying.*) I guess my *Chakra* was wrong. You're a bitch.

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DAISY. No, just not diplomatic. I say it like I see it. Come join us. Just stop all the hiding behind your *chakra* talk. (*Radica gets into the other side of the tub, but she cries quietly.*)

CHASE. (*Stage whisper to Daisy.*) Couldn't you have held your tongue at least until she left to say that? I thought truthfulness was supposed to go hand and hand with *ahimsa*. Non harming. (*He turns to Radica to help her feel better.*) You know I had some buzzing in my heart *chakra*. It's always felt the most open to me. Maybe even too open. Unprotected. I think if you have all that light energy zooming to the sky from your third eye or crown and you aren't anchored in your root *chakra*, you might fly away.

RADICA. You mean a *Kudaline* episode? Grounded is good. I do feel at times I'm going to fly away. But not too grounded. (*Glares at Daisy.*)

JOAN. What are these *chakras*? I didn't get to that class yesterday.

MONA. (*Sits up on block to pontificate.*) I was there. This is what I learned. There are seven centers in our subtle body, our 'energy body.' Most of us are more connected to one or two, but it's good to work on them all to stay balanced. You probably know people who are quintessential root *chakra* people. They are the kind of people who are on time, very organized, have high paying jobs. They have their fundamental needs of survival met in life. Like Judy. (*She winks.*) And there are other people who are only connected to their crown.

RADICA. Yes, like me. Can't remember where they parked their car or where their keys are, often late but are extremely in the moment, creative, imaginative intuitive and connected to the gods. (*To Daisy.*) But rarely MEAN on purpose. When I had my private session with Phil this morning, he said he could see my light shining from my crown. I think we have a real connection with each other.

MONA. I don't think it's your crown *chakra* that's open honey-- it's your *svadistana*. That's your creative center or in this case your sex center.

JOAN. Well, can you blame her? My sex *chakra* is opening by the minute. Every time Phil adjusts me I blush.

MONA. Oh, kill the Buddha when you see him in the road already!

JOAN. What are you talking about?

MONA. It's a Buddhist saying, warning students not to put anyone on a pedestal; the true teacher is the practice and your own insights.

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CHASE. Yes, but that's not what happens. All you ladies drool the minute Phil says anything. What I wouldn't give to be the teacher so all the ladies would fall in love with me.

DAISY. Chase, you can't stop talking about Phil yourself. You're as in love with him as everyone else.

CHASE. Unfair! I admire him. A man's man. It's you I adore, Daisy, only you. *(He kisses her hand.)*

RADICA. *(Still mad at Daisy.)* Lots of luck.

SCENE 9

Joe and Radica's room at the retreat. Joe is visibly tired after a full day of exercise. He's on the bed with his eyes closed. Radica grabs a book about Tantric Yoga and straddles him.

JOE. *(Annoyed, removes her.)* Not now! I've been twisted into a thousand positions today and I can barely move. I need a chiropractor, not another yoga session!

RADICA. *(Hurt, rejected.)* It's not yoga like we've been doing all day-- it's a special kind of yoga-- called Tantric yoga. It'll be a good way for us to re-connect, to find our centers, to experience something special together.

JOE. The only special thing I want to experience now is a burger with onions and cheese and bacon and a beer. This vegan menu is killing me.

RADICA. *(Picks up book – Tantric Sexuality.)* It's about having fabulous, exciting sex. Like for hours at a time.

JOE. *(Eyes open, he's a bit more interested now.)* You mean like *Karma Sutra* stuff? They do that HERE?

RADICA. No, no – don't be ridiculous. Does this look like a *Karma Sutra* crowd? Although I have no idea what a *Karma Sutra* crowd would look like. No, listen, here's what it is: *(Reads.)* "In the act of lovemaking the couple embodies the dyadic wholeness of the Supreme. Tantric sexual union rezones with the foundational energies of the Universe. It captures, magnifies and redirects the essential cosmic power of life. It is not by chance that sexual intercourse brings the most intense emotional

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experience that humans can have while in the flesh. The erotic impulse sets up the *kundalini* energy so that it can rise through the subtle duct of power along the spine to the highest center of power above the head. This process renders the adept immortal.”

JOE. You lost me when you got to the part about dyadic wholeness. Let’s bust out of this place for a few hours and find a diner or Macdonald’s so I can eat greasy food.

RADICA. (*Throwing book down angrily.*) Damn it, Joe, you promised to come to this retreat with an open mind. I thought that meant you would commit yourself seriously to understanding why yoga and meditation and all this helps me see myself more clearly, helps me get in touch with my feelings more. I play golf because you like it, even though you know I prefer to do more active sports. I go to hideous rock concerts because you like rock, even though you know I’d prefer jazz. I go to action movies when they come out – those stupid teenage computer-generated things – when you know I’d prefer to see an independent film that requires some use of the brain. I do all these things for you, to please you, and all I ask is that you come to one fucking yoga retreat. And you can’t even manage that. What kind of relationship is this?

JOE. How did we go from discussing burgers to discussing our relationship?

RADICA. That’s what this weekend is about, for me at least. Our future together is predicated on how you relate to the meaningful things in my life. I mean, where are we with this relationship anyway? What the hell do you want? I sometimes get the feeling we’ll never talk seriously about marriage. You’ll never want to take this to the next level. I’m not even sure you like me!

JOE. Why does every conversation we have always circle back to marriage? We were talking about sex and becoming immortal or something, and you manage to come back to marriage. Okay, fine, let’s just try this *Tantric* sex thing– I’ll get into it, I’m sure. Maybe it will knock the edge off, since there’s nowhere to get a beer.

RADICA. You’re kidding, right? Like I would want to have sex with you now. But I’m not going to let you ruin this week for me. (*Throws the book at him.*) Here, why don’t you look at the pictures and maybe you can have

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sex with yourself. I'm going to the 7:00 Hatha class and then dinner. You can join me or not— suit yourself. (*Radica exits. Joe picks up book and looks at a picture, then at the audience.*)

END OF ACT 1

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