

A Passage To India

By
Doug DeVita

Inspired by the novel by
E.M. Forster

A PASSAGE TO INDIA

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***A Passage To India**
is dedicated to every Fielding
with whom I believed I was in love,
and to the Mahmoud Ali
with whom I was meant to be.*

**Special Thanks to the following for their invaluable contributions
to the development of this play:**

Larry Alexander; Jenne Wason Benoit; Benjamin I. Cardona; David L. Carson; Jay Lucas Chacon; John Chatterton/MITF; Joy Franz; Vince Gatton; David Adam Gill; Maximillian Gill; David Havasi; Craig Houk; Darrin Ingram; Alex Kass; Gene Kato/Next Stage Press; David Michael Kirby; David Mackler; Jay Michaels; Edward Miskie; Joe Moe; Carole Monferdini; Gabriel Mudd; Marie Eléna O'Brien; Patricia Randell; Dan O'Reilly; Samantha Marti Parisi; Anuj Parikh; Mary Powelson; David Sabella; Nora Louise Syran; Jeffrey Sweet; Stewart Alden Tabler; David Warner; Eric Webb

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CHARACTERS 3W, 6M. Diverse casting encouraged.

Adela Quested: Curious. Honest. Searching.

Mrs. Moore: Compassionate. Perceptive. Spiritual.

Mrs. Turton: Commanding. Imperious. Self-delusional.

Dr. Ahmed Aziz: Passionate. Romantic. Proud.

Cyril Fielding: Rational. Humane. Independent.

Mahmoud Ali: Brilliant. Eloquent. Relentless.

Mr. Turton: Authoritative. Pragmatic. Blind.

Ronny Heslop: Dutiful. Ambitious. Constrained.

Mr. McBryde: Methodical. Courteous. Certain.

A Passage To India by Doug DeVita was given its first public presentation in a staged reading directed by the author as part of The Midtown International Theatre Festival at the American Theatre Of Actors in New York City, July 2026. The cast was as follows:

Dr. Aziz | Nitin Madan

Adela Quested | Marie Eléna O'Brien

Mrs. Moore | Joy Franz

Mahmoud Ali | Anuj Parikh

Cyril Fielding | Benjamin I. Cardona

Mr. Turton | David Lee Carson

Mrs. Turton | Patricia Randell

Ronny Heslop | David Mackler

Mr. McBryde | David Sabella

NOTES:

- As the ensemble is both telling and acting the story, they should remain onstage throughout the play unless otherwise noted.
- To keep the action moving fluidly and quickly, the play's many locations should be suggested by lighting, sound, projections if possible (especially for showing Adela's state of mind), and a few utilitarian pieces of furniture cubes would work quite nicely.

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ACT ONE

Prologue: Stars. DR. AZIZ appears in a shaft of moonlight.

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* Chandrapore was never large or beautiful; except for the Marabar Caves – and they are twenty miles off – the city itself presents nothing extraordinary. *(MAHMOUD ALI appears in a shaft of moonlight.)*

MAHMOUD ALI. *(To the audience.)* Edged rather than washed by the river Ganges, it trails for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely. *(CYRIL FIELDING appears in a shaft of moonlight.)*

FIELDING. *(To the audience.)* The little British civil station stands on the high ground by the railway station, and looking down from there Chandrapore appears a totally different place, a city of gardens soaring above the lower deposit to greet one with branches and beckoning leaves.

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* Only the view is beautiful; it shares nothing with the city except the overarching sky. League after league the earth lies flat, heaves a little, and lies flat again.

MAHMOUD ALI. *(To the audience.)* Except for the south, where a group of fists and fingers are thrust up through the soil. These fists and fingers are the Marabar hills, containing the now infamous caves.

Chandrapore, India. 1927. A Garden. Aziz and Fielding have their arms around each other under the starlit sky.

AZIZ. My friend Mahmoud Ali is no friend to the British, Mr. Fielding. Yet here we are. Friends. More than friends. *(Fielding leans in and gives Aziz a long, sensuous kiss.)*

FIELDING. You may call me Cyril, you know.

AZIZ. What would your friends at the club say if they knew about us?

FIELDING. They are not my friends, Aziz. They are merely ex-pats like me. You and I do nothing they don't.

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AZIZ. Ah, but they do it with each other, not with Indians. And they are married. You are not. And therefore, sadly, you will not have children.

FIELDING. I do not care for children.

AZIZ. Do you not care that your name will die out?

FIELDING. They will be missing me at the club; I must get back before their blasted amateur theatrical is over. ... Aziz, I am sorry. I don't mean to be so churlish. I'm quite content with things as they are with us. *(They kiss again; Fielding leaves the scene.)*

A Mosque.

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* Dr. Aziz begins to walk, passing through the abandoned, overgrown garden with its crumbling statuary, statues which in daylight shock the staid English who have learned to look the other way on the odd occasions they venture beyond the safety of their club, but to him represent his sensuous, deep relationship with the British schoolmaster Cyril Fielding. At the edge of the civil station he turns into a mosque to rest. In the stillness, the poorly played music wafting over from the club hangs in the air, presaging the heavy heat and humidity to come, but the wildflowers smell deliciously. As he breathes the delicate aroma of the night air in his post-coital bliss, one of the pillars in the mosque seems to quiver. Belief in ghosts runs deep in his blood, but he sits firm. Another pillar moves, then a third, then an elderly English woman steps out into the moonlight. *(MRS. MOORE enters the scene.)* Madam? Madam?

MRS. MOORE. Oh!

AZIZ. Madam, this is a mosque, you have no right here at all; this is a holy place for Moslems. You should have taken off your shoes.

MRS. MOORE. I have taken them off.

AZIZ. You have?

MRS. MOORE. I left them at the entrance.

AZIZ. Then I ask your pardon. I am truly sorry for speaking in so rude a manner.

MRS. MOORE. I was right, was I not? If I remove my shoes, I am allowed?

AZIZ. Of course. But so few English ladies take the trouble, especially if they think no one is here to see.

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MRS. MOORE. That makes no difference. God is here.

AZIZ. God is here. Very good. Very fine indeed. May I know your name?

MRS. MOORE. Mrs. Moore. And you are?

AZIZ. Dr. Sachin Aziz. I am afraid I startled you, Mrs. Moore. I think you are newly arrived in India.

MRS. MOORE. Yes. How did you know?

AZIZ. By the way you address me. May I call you a carriage?

MRS. MOORE. I have only come from the club. They are doing a tiresome musical play that I have seen in London, and it was so hot.

AZIZ. I think you ought not to walk at night alone, Mrs. Moore. There are bad characters about, and leopards may come from the Marabar hills. Snakes also.

MRS. MOORE. But you walk about yourself?

AZIZ. Oh, I am used to it.

MRS. MOORE. Used to snakes?

AZIZ. Snakes do not dare bite me.

MRS. MOORE. Doctors have a special dispensation from snake bites?

AZIZ. (*Chuckling.*) No. But I will tell you something, Mrs. Moore: the snakes will only bite if they sense danger to themselves or their nests. If one is just passing by, they merely hiss. I know where the nests are, so I am in no danger.

MRS. MOORE. I see.

AZIZ. Please, may I ask you a question now? Why do you come to India this time of year, just as the cooler weather is ending?

MRS. MOORE. I have come to visit my son. He is the City Magistrate here.

AZIZ. Oh, no, that is quite impossible. Our City Magistrate's name is Heslop.

MRS. MOORE. He is my son, all the same.

AZIZ. But Mrs. Moore, how can that be?

MRS. MOORE. I was married twice.

AZIZ. Yes, now I see, and your first husband died?

MRS. MOORE. He did. And so did my second husband.

AZIZ. Then we are in the same box. In giving me a daughter, my wife has also unfortunately died. And is Mr. Heslop the entire of your family now?

MRS. MOORE. No. I have another son, and a daughter – Ralph and Stella,

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from my second husband. They remain in England.

AZIZ. Mrs. Moore, this is all extremely strange, because like yourself I have also two sons and a daughter.

MRS. MOORE. What are their names? Surely not Ronny, Ralph, and Stella?

AZIZ. No, indeed. The first is called Ahmed, the second is called Karim, the third – she is the youngest – Jemila. Three children are enough. Do you not agree with me?

MRS. MOORE. I should have liked one or two more, but I married my second husband a bit too late.

AZIZ. Mrs. Moore, may I admit something to you? When I first saw you, I thought you might be a ghost!

MRS. MOORE. Do you believe in ghosts, Dr. Aziz?

AZIZ. Oh yes, I do. Do you?

MRS. MOORE. I do.

AZIZ. Is this not the same box with a vengeance?

MRS. MOORE. But I do not believe all ghosts are vengeful. I believe most are beneficent souls with unfinished business here on earth.

AZIZ. Beneficent souls. I think you may be a little bit Indian, Mrs. Moore.

MRS. MOORE. (*Chuckling.*) In a former life, perhaps?

AZIZ. Ah! I now also believe you are also a very old soul.

MRS. MOORE. (*To the audience.*) They are both silent for a little while, then Mrs. Moore sighed and rose to go, accepting his escort back to the club. (*To Aziz.*) I wish I were a member so that I could have asked you in.

AZIZ. Indians are not allowed into the Chandrapore Club, even as guests.

MRS. MOORE. (*Taking his hand.*) Oh. Well then. I shall leave you here. Thank you, Dr. Aziz. I do hope we will meet again.

AZIZ. Thank you, Mrs. Moore. I do hope we will. (*To the audience.*) And as he leaves her at the gate to the club, he strolls downhill beneath the lovely moon. He is happy. He has his friend and deep love, Cyril Fielding. He has his good friend since childhood, Mahmoud Ali. And now he has Mrs. Moore, whom he instinctively knows understands him, who feels what others feel. They will be friends. He is indeed happy.

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Aziz's bungalow.

MAHMOUD ALI. *(To the audience.)* The hookah has been packed too tight, as is usual at his friend Sachin Aziz's house, and it bubbles sulkily. Mahmoud Ali coaxes it. It yields at last, driving out the smoke of burning cow dung wafting up from the bazaar below. It is delicious indeed to lie on a broad verandah with the moon rising in front while discussing, once again, whether or not it is possible to be friends with the English. *(To Aziz.)* And look at my own experience this morning, Sachin! That pale toffee-nosed City Magistrate Heslop has again insulted me in court. Until lately, he was quite a nice boy, but the others have got hold of him. I give any Englishman two years. I give any English woman six months. Do you not agree with me?

AZIZ. I do not, Ali.

MAHMOUD ALI. I cannot tell if it is the tobacco or the cow dung, but you are talking nonsense, my friend. In any event, despite Heslop's insult I won my case. The law was clear; he had no choice but to rule in my favor and it vexed him. I do not blame him. He was told he ought to insult me.

AZIZ. *(To the audience)* Aziz is sorely tempted to tell his old friend he had met his adversary's mother, Mrs. Moore, but he knows better and contents himself by laying in the haze of a deliciously sensual trance, thinking about Mrs. Moore and Cyril Fielding and what Ali would say if he knew about either one of them. Especially Fielding; Aziz has often wondered, somewhat wistfully, what Ali would say about his relationship with Cyril Fielding.

MAHMOUD ALI. *(To the audience.)* And for his part, Ali wonders what Aziz would say if he knew how he truly feels for his friend. He longs for that ancient time when love of all kinds was accepted and celebrated, before the arrival of Islam followed by the Christian-derived morality of European colonialism and hypocrisy ruined a sacred bond of love and pleasure that concern no one but the parties involved. "The parties involved. I'm such a barrister" he thinks as he contemplates spending another sleepless night alone.

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The Club.

MRS. MOORE. *(To the audience.)* The third act of that tiresome play is well advanced by the time Mrs. Moore re-enters the club. The windows are barred lest the servants see their memsahibs acting, and the heat is consequently immense. Disinclined to return to the audience, she wanders into the slightly less fetid billiard room. *(ADELA QUESTED enters the scene.)*

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* Where she is presently joined by her son Ronny's intended, Adela Quested. *(To Mrs. Moore.)* Did you succeed in catching the moon in the Ganges?

MRS. MOORE. I went to the mosque, but I did not catch the moon. Let me think; we don't see the other side of the moon out here, do we?

ADELA. We aren't even seeing the other side of the world out here. *(Staring at a tea sandwich.)* Cucumber. It's always cucumber, isn't it?

MRS. MOORE. You'll be tired of lamb curry soon enough. *(To the audience.)* Mrs. Moore is not sure Adela Quested fully understands what she will be facing; she recognizes Adela sees this as an escape from a genteel, upper middle-class spinsterhood, a chance for a kind of marital bliss with her son Ronny. Mrs. Moore has concerns.

ADELA. *(To Mrs. Moore.)* Chandrapore. Such an interesting name. I had hoped it would be beautiful. And mysterious. And exciting. We might as well be having tea at the Georgian in Harrod's.

MRS. MOORE. You are a romantic, Adela.

ADELA. Yes, I suppose I am.

MRS. MOORE. I'm not sure that's such a good thing to be in India, my dear.

ADELA. Why ever not?

MRS. MOORE. Adela... You've come halfway around the world to a country where we English are both suspicious and suspect. India... it has a way of forcing you to see things about yourself you'd never expect are possible.

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* Meanwhile the performance comes to an end, and the National Anthem is played. Conversations and billiards stop.

MRS. MOORE. *(To the audience.)* It is the Anthem of the Army of

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Occupation. It reminds every member of the club they are British and in exile.

ADELA. It ends and they pour out, offering each other drinks. (*TURTON and MRS. TURTON enter the scene.*)

TURTON. (*To Mrs. Moore and Adela.*) Mrs. Moore. Miss Quested. I have sent our Ronny on a personal errand for me. Would you care to join my wife and I for a drink?

ADELA. Oh yes thank you, Mr. Turton.

MRS. MOORE. Nothing for me, thank you.

ADELA. Mr. Turton, Mrs. Moore and I would like to see something of the real India. (*Fielding crosses.*)

TURTON. Fielding? How is one to see the real India?

FIELDING. (*As he exits.*) Try seeing real Indians.

ADELA. Who is that?

TURTON. Cyril Fielding, our schoolmaster – Government College.

MRS. TURTON. As if one could avoid seeing Indians of any kind.

ADELA. I've avoided. Excepting Ronny's servant, I've scarcely spoken to an Indian since we arrived in India two weeks ago.

MRS. TURTON. Lucky you.

ADELA. But I want to see them.

MRS. TURTON. Fancy that.

ADELA. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Turton?

MRS. TURTON. I was a nurse before my marriage and came across them a great deal, so I really do know the truth about the Indians. One must remain sternly aloof from those unsightly creatures.

ADELA. I don't understand. Don't you find them a beautiful race?

MRS. TURTON. BEAUTIFUL!?! Dear girl, are you quite mad?

ADELA. No, I really don't think so. Why do you ask?

TURTON. If you really want to meet the Indo-Aryan Brother, Miss Quested, that can easily be fixed. You can see practically any type you like; in my position as Tax Collector for the district I know the Government people and the landowners, your fiancé Heslop can get the judicial / contingent

ADELA. / He is not my fiancé yet, Mr. Turton.

MRS. MOORE. That is why we have come here: to see if Miss Quested and my Ronny are a match.

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MRS. TURTON. Of course. *(To Adela.)* I suppose one extended holiday in the lake district is not quite enough time for young lovers to really get to know one / another...

MRS. MOORE. / I was traveling with Ronny along with my younger son and daughter, Mrs. Turton, and Miss Quested was being chaperoned by her aunt.

MRS. TURTON. Oh, yes, of course, I didn't mean to imply... *(MCBRYDE enters. Mrs. Turton immediately becomes girlish and flirty.)* Mr. McBryde! Do join us for a drink. It is so hot I'm sure you could use a refreshing, cooling beverage. A gin and tonic, perhaps?

TURTON. Mrs. Moore, Miss Quested, Mr. McBryde is our chief prosecutor here in Chandrapore. He works very closely with our Ronny. McBryde, Mrs. Moore here is Heslop's mother, and Miss Quested may become his intended.

MCBRYDE. Welcome to Chandrapore.

MRS. TURTON. Mr. McBryde, perhaps you would care to stop by our bungalow for a drink before going home?

TURTON. You forget, Mary, our Ronny is there right now.

MRS. TURTON. *(Sharply.)* I have not forgotten, Harry. I merely thought...

MCBRYDE. Another time perhaps. Good evening, Mr. Turton. Ladies.

MRS. TURTON. Yes. Another time. Good night, Mr. McBryde. *(She stares after him as he exits, barely masking her lust.)*

TURTON. Yes. Well. As I was saying, Miss Quested, Heslop can get hold of the barrister crew, while if you want to specialize in education, we can come down on Fielding.

MRS. TURTON. Oh, yes. Mr. Fielding is quite invested in befriending the Indo-Aryan Brother.

TURTON. That is his job, Mary.

ADELA. I am tired of seeing picturesque figures presented before me as a frieze. We had one experience in Bombay, on our way to the train from the boat, when our Tonga is stopped by an accident ahead of us just outside the entrance to the dock. A beautiful woman in an incredibly vivid purple silk sari suddenly appears. "Give me money, sister, give me money." I'd already been warned not to engage with anyone, to not even look at them, but... I do look at her, and I say "No, I'm sorry." She becomes relentless. "Give me money, sister." The driver looks straight ahead and says nothing. I'm

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horrified, but fascinated. There is something so dignified about that purple sari: it is so richly colored, so flowing, so clean despite the filthy hands pressing against the side of our Tonga. The accident clears, we begin moving, she just keeps running along with us. "Give me money, sister. Please, sister. Give me money!" The driver makes a sharp turn and she falls, rolling into the crowds of Indians leaving the ship on foot. I watch as she gets up, carefully brushes the dust from the road out of her sari, scanning the other Tongas driving away from the dock as if nothing happened. I'm so shaken but at the same time I marvel at her relentless drive, her sheer will to get what she wants, and yes, her sari: so beautiful. So bright. So clean. How? These are things I want to know. This is why I want to meet real Indians, particularly those Indians you come across socially, as friends.

MRS. TURTON. We do not come across them socially, Miss Quested, let alone as friends.

ADELA. I'm sorry, but I don't understand? Why not?

MRS. TURTON. Miss Quested! If you plan to stay with us here / in Chandra...

TURTON. / If you're so intent on meeting the natives, Miss Quested, I dare say we can throw a bridge party.

ADELA. Bridge party?

TURTON. Not the game. A garden party to "bridge the gap" so to speak.

ADELA. Oh, that would be lovely, Mr. Turton. Thank you, yes, if it's not too much trouble.

TURTON. No trouble at all. Come, Mary. It's late. Good evening, ladies.

MRS. TURTON. (*Hissing to Turton as they leave.*) No trouble at all, Harry?

TURTON. No trouble at all, Mary. Remember, it is one of our duties.

MRS. TURTON. I'll be very much surprised if even one of them shows up. They hate these things as much as we do.

TURTON. Mary! It is in everyone's best interest to see Ronny Heslop married. You of all people should understand the importance of this.

MRS. TURTON. But Adela Quested? How anyone that awkward can be right for our Ronny is beyond me. She isn't pukka, and I doubt she ever will be.

TURTON. She might not be completely first class yet, but she will adjust. She will become pukka. And her very presence will quell the gossip.

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MRS. TURTON. Mark my words, Harry: Adela Quested will be trouble. She may adjust, as you say, but she will never understand.

TURTON. *(To the audience.)* Mr. and Mrs. Turton's withdrawal from the club has broken up the evening; at Chandrapore the tax collector and his haughty wife are little gods. They reach their bungalow, have one more drink...

RONNY. *(To the audience.)* With Ronny Heslop...

TURTON. *(To the audience.)* Yes. Then Mrs. Turton retires to her bedroom, while Turton and Heslop retire to his bedroom.

RONNY. *(To the audience.)* As they do twice a week.

TURTON. *(To Mrs. Turton.)* I do admire how you watch out for my interests, Mary, and never betray any jealousy.

MRS. TURTON. *(To the audience.)* Everyone knows about Mr. Turton and Ronny Heslop; indeed Mrs. Turton is not the only wife in the civil station looking the other way; no one says anything about private peccadilloes as long as the public status quo remains undisturbed. But Mr. Turton is correct; it will be far better for all concerned when the City Magistrate is married – even if it must be to someone as ill-suited as the unfortunate Miss Adela Quested.

Ronny's Bungalow. RONNY HESLOP, Mrs. Moore, and Adela.

MRS. MOORE. I did not particularly dislike the play, Ronny, but having seen it already and it being so hot, I needed to get some air.

RONNY. But mother, you can't do that sort of thing. Not in this country. There's the danger of the cobras, for one thing. They are apt to be out at night.

MRS. MOORE. But they are not apt to be as dangerous as you may think.

RONNY. Oh, really, mother? You know this?

MRS. MOORE. I met a young Indian man in the mosque, and he / explained

ADELA. / You met an Indian man in the mosque, and then never let me know? Oh, this sounds very exciting and exotic.

MRS. MOORE. I was going to tell you, Adela, but Mr. and Mrs. Turton...

ADELA. Dreadful woman.

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MRS. MOORE. Yes, she is rather, isn't she?

ADELA. Did you see how she practically threw herself at Mr. McBryde? And in front of her husband!

RONNY. Please, Adela, mother, you can't, you mustn't talk about my superiors in such a way.

MRS. MOORE. I mustn't?

ADELA. I can't?

RONNY. (*Backing down.*) Not publicly. Please.

ADELA. Fine. Mrs. Turton is not worth gossiping about anyway. (*To Mrs. Moore.*) Was the young man nice?

MRS. MOORE. Very nice. He called out to me about my shoes; he was afraid I had them on, but I had remembered. He told me of his children, that he's a doctor, a widower, and about snakes. Then we walked back to the club. He wouldn't come in; he said he wasn't allowed.

ADELA. How perfectly magnificent. Ronny, isn't that just like your mother? Here I am talking about seeing the real India, and she goes and sees it, and then forgets she's seen it!

RONNY. He called to you about your shoes? The impudence! You oughtn't have answered.

ADELA. But Ronny, wouldn't you expect a Mohammedan to answer if you asked him to take off his hat in church?

RONNY. It's different.

ADELA. What is the difference?

RONNY. You don't understand.

ADELA. I know I don't, and I want to. What is the difference, please?

RONNY. Please, Adela, don't go crooked over the native question. It won't serve either of us well if you decide to stay and we are married.

ADELA. But Ronny...

RONNY. You say he's a doctor, Mother?

MRS. MOORE. Yes. I believe he said his name is Aziz.

RONNY. Ah. That's a relief. Aziz is quite alright. He knows his place. I have nothing against him.

ADELA. How very gracious of you.

RONNY. We are not out here to be gracious, Adela! India isn't a drawing room. We are out here to do justice and keep the peace.

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MRS. MOORE. Your sentiments are those of a god.

RONNY. The Indians like their gods.

ADELA. And the English like posing as gods.

RONNY. Do you expect me to lose such power as I have for doing good in this country because my behavior isn't gracious? We are not gracious in India, and we don't intend to be gracious. We've something much more important to do.

ADELA. Such as?

MRS. MOORE. I am going to argue that, Ronny: the English *are* out here to be gracious.

RONNY. How do you make that out, mother?

MRS. MOORE. Because India is part of the earth. And God has put us on this earth in order to help guide each other along the way whether we realize it or not. He is omnipresent, even in India, to see how we are succeeding.

RONNY. Yes. Well. I ought to get to my courtroom, and you'll be off to the club.

ADELA. You didn't answer my question, Ronny: what is so much more important than being gracious when taking over someone else's country?

RONNY. I will join you at the club for cocktails and dinner this evening.
(He gives her an awkward peck on the cheek, then abruptly goes.)

MRS. MOORE. Be patient, my dear. Ronny is a rather conventional young man, somewhat awkward and rather unsure of himself with women. Very much like his father in that respect.

ADELA. Conventional or not, I'd rather hoped Ronny would come to bid me goodnight when he got home last night.

MRS. MOORE. I suspect he did not want to awaken you, dear.

ADELA. But I was awake. I even left my light on, and the door open a crack.

MRS. MOORE. *(To the audience.)* Mrs. Moore also suspects Ronny is much more like his father than she had realized. Will Adela be able to turn as blind an eye as she had with her first husband?

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The Bridge Party.

TURTON. *(To the audience.)* Turton keeps his word. The next day he issues invitations to numerous Indian gentlemen in the neighborhood, stating that he will be receiving in the garden of the club between the hours of five and seven on the following Tuesday, also that Mrs. Turton will be most glad to entertain any ladies of their families who are out of purdah.

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* The Bridge Party is not a success.

MRS. MOORE. *(To the audience.)* At least it is not what Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested are accustomed to considering a successful party.

TURTON. *(To the audience.)* East stays east.

MRS. TURTON. *(To the audience.)* And west stays west.

FIELDING. *(To the audience.)* And despite the Turton's clearly strenuous efforts to mingle, the twain do not meet.

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* Very few Indians. Far too many cucumber sandwiches. The only positive to the party, at least for Adela, is her introduction to Cyril Fielding and their subsequent conversation.

FIELDING. *(To Adela.)* Oh yes, I know Dr. Aziz, vaguely.

ADELA. *(To Fielding.)* I was rather hoping to meet him here today. Mrs. Moore says he is quite charming.

FIELDING. I've heard he can be. But he is not fond of the Turtons.

ADELA. Oh, then I like him already. *(Focus shifts to Ronny and Mrs. Moore.)*

MRS. MOORE. This whole affair is unnatural.

RONNY. Of course it's unnatural. And now you understand the problems we are facing out here. Have some tea, mother.

MRS. MOORE. I do not want tea, Ronny! I do not understand, I will never understand how anyone can issue an invitation and then treat their guests so rudely. Bridge party? It is nothing more than an exercise in British power and presumed superiority. Look at Mr. and Mrs. Turton. Condescending to everyone who is not a member of their club; they might as well take a torch and burn their sham bridge to ash. *(Focus back on Adela and Fielding.)*

FIELDING. If you like, I can invite you to meet Dr. Aziz for tea at my bungalow.

ADELA. Oh, that would be charming! Mrs. Moore too?

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FIELDING. Yes, of course.

ADELA. Thank you, Mr. Fielding. May I make one small request?

FIELDING. Yes?

ADELA. Please do not serve cucumber sandwiches.

FIELDING. Never fear, Miss Quested. I can't stand them either.

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* Aziz has been told by Major Callendar, his superior at the Minto hospital, that he is expected to attend the bridge party. But seized with revulsion at the thought of being forced to socialize with Mr. and Mrs. Turton he determines not to go. The following day he receives an envelope bearing the Government stamp. It lays on his table like a high explosive, which at a touch might blow his flimsy bungalow to bits. He knows he is going to be cashiered for not turning up at the party. When he opens the note, however, it proves to be something quite different: it is an invitation from Cyril Fielding.

FIELDING. *(Reading his invitation to Aziz.)* Aziz, Dear Chap; I am hosting a tea for Mrs. Moore, whom I believe you have met, and her future daughter-in-law, Miss Adela Quested, on Friday next at 5:00pm. Miss Quested would like to meet you, having heard Mrs. Moore speak very highly of you. Yours, Cyril Fielding. PS. Come at 4:00.

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* This invitation gives him particular joy, for not once has he been invited into Fielding's home. Snatching up his pen, he writes an affectionate reply. *(To Fielding.)* My Dearest Friend; I am overjoyed by your invitation, and I most happily accept. I will be there at 4:00. Your Aziz. *(To the audience.)* Aziz sincerely believes that one serious gap in his life is now going to be made complete.

Fielding's Bungalow. Aziz is getting dressed, Fielding is wearing only a towel and carrying his shirt. Their hair is still wet, as if they'd both just taken a shower. Fielding drops something, on which he inadvertently steps.

FIELDING. Ouch! Damn!

AZIZ. Is there anything wrong?

FIELDING. I've stamped on my last collar stud.

AZIZ. Take mine.

FIELDING. Have you a spare one?

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AZIZ. *(Removing his back collar stud.)* Yes, yes, one minute.

FIELDING. Not if you're wearing it yourself.

AZIZ. No, no, I have another in my back pocket.

FIELDING. You're lying Aziz.

AZIZ. No matter. I will not turn my back to them so they will not notice.

Here. (Aziz holds out the collar stud. Fielding starts to take it, then takes Aziz's hand, pulling him in close. They share a brief but intimate moment, interrupted by a hubbub indicating Mrs. Moore and Adela have arrived.)

FIELDING. Blast. They're early. *(Fielding quickly finishes dressing. Aziz attaches his back collar stud to Fielding's shirt. One more quick kiss before they go to meet Adela and Mrs. Moore.)*

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* How fortunate it is to be an unconventional party, where formalities are ruled out. On this basis Aziz finds the English ladies easy to talk to; he treats them like men. Beauty would have troubled him for it entails rules of its own, but Mrs. Moore is so old and Miss Quested so plain that he's spared this anxiety. *(Adela and Mrs. Moore enter the scene. Adela is brimming with scarcely controlled excitement. Mrs. Moore observes Fielding and Aziz both have wet hair; smiling to herself, she says nothing.)*

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* Miss Quested, for her part, is immediately taken with Dr. Aziz. She doesn't think she's ever seen a man as charming – or as beautiful – as the Indian doctor before her; she instantly feels a stronger attraction than she's ever felt for any man, including – unfortunately – her intended. *(To Aziz.)* I want to ask you something, Dr. Aziz. Can you explain a disappointment we had this morning; it must be some point of etiquette we have unwittingly broken?

MRS. MOORE. I am afraid somehow we must have given offense.

AZIZ. I'm sure that is impossible. But may I know the facts?

ADELA. An Indian lady and gentlemen we met at the bridge party were to send their carriage for us at nine this morning. We waited and waited and waited; we can't think what happened.

FIELDING. A misunderstanding, no doubt.

ADELA. It wasn't that, I feel sure. We must have made some stupid blunder.

FIELDING. I wouldn't worry about it.

ADELA. Exactly what Ronny tells me. But if one doesn't worry, how is one to understand?

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AZIZ. I think they grew ashamed of their house, and that is why they did not send for you. That will not happen when you come to see me! Mrs. Moore, everyone: I invite you all!

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* Miss Quested accepts immediately; her sense of adventure is piqued. She also likes Aziz; attracted to both his mind and his form, she genuinely, if perhaps naively, believes that when she knows him better he will unlock his country's mysteries for her. *(To Aziz.)* Thank you, Dr. Aziz. May I have your address?

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* Aziz thinks of his bungalow with horror. There is only one room, and that is infested with small black flies. Aside from Mahmoud Ali, whose own bungalow is only nominally better, only Cyril Fielding has been invited, and then only in the dead of night in the darkest darkness. *(To Adela and Mrs. Moore.)* I have a much better idea! I invite you all to see the Marabar Caves.

ADELA. The Marabar Caves?

AZIZ. Have you not heard of them?

ADELA. We hear nothing of interest at the club. Only tennis, billiards, ridiculous gossip, and those incessantly boring cucumber sandwiches.

AZIZ. But surely you've seen them, reaching into the southern sky like beckoning fingers?

ADELA. How poetic. Are they large caves?

AZIZ. No, not large. But there are many of them, and they are decorated... provocatively. *(Ronny enters the scene.)*

ADELA. Oh, Ronny! Isn't it exciting? Dr. Aziz here has proposed to take us to the Marabar Caves! *(In her excitement, she tries to give him a kiss on the cheek, which he rebuffs.)*

AZIZ. Of course, you must join us, Mr. Heslop.

RONNY. Come, Adela, mother. We must leave now. There is to be polo. I don't suppose you'd care join us, Fielding? I'm sure we would all be delighted.

FIELDING. I'm afraid I can't, thanks all the same.

ADELA. Ronny, don't be a bore. Ask Dr. Aziz if he'd care to / join

RONNY. / Adela, you know he's not welcome on the polo grounds.

ADELA. Isn't there anywhere here people are welcomed in their own country?

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RONNY. Adela!

AZIZ. I am quite busy this evening. Thank you all the same.

FIELDING. *(To the audience.)* Everyone is suddenly cross, as if irritation exuded from the very soil. Could one have been so petty on a Scotch moor or an Italian alp, Fielding wonders? *(To Aziz, after everyone else has left the scene.)* Come, Aziz. We have some unfinished business... *(Fielding takes Aziz's hand and leads him off.)*

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* Although Adela had known Ronny as the stepbrother of her schoolmate Stella Moore, she now realizes she has been well advised to visit him before deciding to become his wife. India has developed sides of his character she's never admired; it takes only one poorly timed question before she becomes so impatient with him she opens fire.

Ronny's Carriage.

RONNY. What was that about the caves?

ADELA. Your mother's delightful new friend has decided on a picnic instead of a party at his house. We are to meet him there.

RONNY. Meet him where?

ADELA. Aren't you listening? The Marabar Caves!

RONNY. And did he condescend to give you any details?

ADELA. He did not. If you had condescended to speak to him we might have arranged them.

RONNY. *(Laughing.)* Oh, Adela, you can't be serious.

ADELA. Have I said something funny?

RONNY. I was only thinking how Aziz's collar climbed up his neck. He is exquisitely dressed, from tiepin to spats, but has forgotten his back collar-stud.

ADELA. I thought we were discussing the caves.

RONNY. We are. He expects all of you to meet in the caves as if they were the clock at Charing Cross, when in reality they are miles from the station and from each other. And there you have the Indian all over: inattention to detail.

ADELA. Have you been to them?

RONNY. No, but I know all about them, naturally.

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ADELA. Naturally.

RONNY. Are you pledged to this expedition, Mother?

MRS. MOORE. I am pledged to nothing. Certainly not to the polo. Will you drive up to your bungalow and drop me there? I prefer to rest.

ADELA. Drop me there too. I don't want to watch the polo either, I'm sure.

RONNY. Simpler to just drop the polo.

ADELA. Fine. But for heaven's sake do not stop at that Godforsaken club. I just can't face another evening of warm gin and cold wives pretending they don't care about their husband's inattention.

RONNY. And just what do you mean by that?

ADELA. At least Dr. Aziz and Mr. Fielding are interesting and interested in what / we

RONNY. / Aziz? And Fielding? Interested in you? Don't make me laugh.

ADELA. (*Losing her temper.*) You've made it quite clear you have very little interest in me aside from being a jewel in your crown to show off to your friends at the club.

RONNY. (*Losing his temper.*) Adela! I won't have you messing about with Indians anymore. If it's so important for you to go to the Marabar Caves, and for the life of me I can't understand why, you will go under British auspices.

ADELA. "Under British auspices!?! " Really, Ronny, you have become such a pompous ass.

MRS. MOORE. (*Losing her temper.*) I really won't have all this quarreling and tiresomeness! I have never heard of these caves. I don't know what they are, or where they are, nor do I care. (*They continue in silence.*)

RONNY. I've made myself rather ridiculous just now. With you here, mother, and not knowing for certain whether or not Adela and I are to be married, I'm rather on pins and needles as they say. I'm sorry.

MRS. MOORE. Very nicely put, Ronny dear. Sometimes I think too much fuss is made about marriage. Century after century of carnal embracement and we're still no nearer understanding each other. We're home.

RONNY. Let me help you, Mother.

MRS. MOORE. I am quite capable, Ronald. Good night. (*She leaves the scene.*)

RONNY. My temper's rotten, I must apologize. I didn't mean to order you and mother about, but of course the way those Bengalis let you down this

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morning annoyed me. I don't want that sort of thing to keep happening.

ADELA. It has nothing to do with them. ... Ronny? I... I have concerns. About you. About me. About us.

RONNY. I see.

ADELA. If we are to be married I will want children. You do understand what I mean by that?

RONNY. (*Stammering.*) Oh. Well. Yes. Naturally. Of course.

ADELA. I've made you uncomfortable.

RONNY. No. Not at all. I suppose we must discuss those things.

ADELA. Good. I agree. I will be happy to be your wife, and I pledge to do my best to not embarrass you or do you any discredit, but I will not be happy being restricted by the boundaries set by that dreadful club and those dreadful women who perch there. I did not come here to spend my life drinking tea and eating blasted cucumber sandwiches. I can bloody well do that in London.

RONNY. Adela!

ADELA. You can't be surprised by this. My independent nature is one of the things you've said you liked about me in England.

RONNY. I suppose you're right. ... Adela, look here: I have no authority to dictate to you or to mother what you can or cannot do. See India if you like, and as you like.

ADELA. Thank you, Ronny.

RONNY. But do try to defer to Mrs. Turton and be civil to the other ladies if and when we must attend functions at the club.

ADELA. Yes. Of course.

The Club. Adela and Mrs. Moore. Adela is staring at a cucumber sandwich.

ADELA. Cucumber. Echhh. (*Dropping the sandwich.*) "See India as you like," he says. But not without a guide, he means. And here we are stuck in this club day after day, with no one even remotely interested in escorting us anywhere we'd like to go. And still no invitation from Dr. Aziz.

MRS. MOORE. Now, now. It's only been a couple of days.

ADELA. I'm so bored I could scream.

MRS. MOORE. I have learned life never gives us what we want at the

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moment we consider appropriate. Adventures do occur, but not punctually. Be patient, Adela dear.

ADELA. That mosque where you met Dr. Aziz? It's not far, is it? I should so love to see it.

MRS. MOORE. No, it's not far, but...

ADELA. Ronny said I could see India if I wish, as I wish, and I wish to see that mosque. You don't have to go with me, just point me in the right direction and I'll go by myself.

MRS. MOORE. I am quite sure you would. Very well. *(As they get up to leave, Mrs. Turton bustles into the scene.)*

MRS. TURTON. Well, and where are you two off to? I thought we could have a nice conversation and get to know each other a bit over a proper English tea.

ADELA. *(With exaggerated deference.)* Oh, well that sounds quite lovely, Mrs. Turton. I was remarking to Mrs. Moore how delicious these cucumber sandwiches are. Even better than those one finds at the Georgian in Harrod's.

MRS. TURTON. We do our best to make things feel like home here.

MRS. MOORE. And how well you succeed, Mrs. Turton.

MRS. TURTON. Why are we being so formal? We're all practically family here at Chandrapore. You may call me Mary, you know. And I may call you Angela, mayn't I?

MRS. MOORE. You may call me Mrs. Moore, Mrs. Turton.

MRS. TURTON. *(Flustered.)* Oh. Yes. Mrs. Moore. Well...

ADELA. We are on our way to visit that charming little mosque just a bit down the road.

MRS. TURTON. Leave the confines of the club? It isn't safe!

MRS. MOORE. I have been before, Mrs. Turton. I'm sure we will be quite alright together. It is still daylight, and we'll be back before the sun sets.

ADELA. Would you care to join us, dearest Mrs. Turton?

MRS. TURTON. I should think not.

ADELA. Yes. Well. Enjoy your tea. Perhaps we will all meet later for cocktails? *(Smiling at Mrs. Turton, she gives her a quick curtsy as she and Mrs. Moore leave her.)*

MRS. MOORE. Really, Adela! "Dearest Mrs. Turton?"

ADELA. Ronny told me to be deferential to her.

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MRS. MOORE. But I'm not entirely certain he meant for you to curtsy.

ADELA. I'm not entirely certain he didn't.

MRS. MOORE. A word of advice, Adela, about "dearest Mrs. Turton." I've known many like her, here and in England. She is deeply unhappy; like most unhappy people she does not like it when anyone else is happy and can in the name of good manners cause a great deal of unhappiness for those in her orbit.

ADELA. And yet you just antagonized her. "You may call me Mrs. Moore, Mrs. Turton." Really. What will Ronny say to that?

MRS. MOORE. *(Smiling.)* You may be staying here. I most certainly will not. *(To the audience.)* As they pass through the garden just a bit beyond the gates of the club, what in the dark Mrs. Moore had taken for crumbling piles of an ancient stone wall, in the light reveal remnants of what had been exquisitely carved statues of all manner of couples engaged in all manner of sexual ecstasy.

The Garden on the way to the Mosque. Adela stops to stare at the statues. We see brief flashes of Adela imagining Ronny and Dr. Aziz; Ronny small and crumbling, Aziz virile and seductive.

ADELA. Oh... Those statues. They're rather... provocative, aren't they?

MRS. MOORE. Yes, they are rather. Are you offended, my dear?

ADELA. ... No. Not at all. Not really. ... But I do wonder what Ronny would say about them?

MRS. MOORE. I doubt he's even seen them. I doubt he's even been off the civil station since he arrived except to go to and from his courthouse.

ADELA. It would do him a world of good if he did.

MRS. MOORE. Perhaps. *(A cobra rears its head, flares its hood, and hisses. Adela steps back, startled.)*

ADELA. Oh, dear.

MRS. MOORE. There's nothing to worry about. It will not attack us.

ADELA. Are you sure?

MRS. MOORE. As we are not going to approach it, we will not pose any danger to it. It is merely hissing to warn us from disturbing its nest.

ADELA. How do you know this?

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MRS. MOORE. Dr. Aziz explained it to me the night we met in the mosque. (*Taking Adela firmly by the hand.*) But nonetheless, we must be on our way, my dear. (*They leave quickly.*)

The Mosque. The ladies are barefoot.

ADELA. I like this. It's peaceful.

MRS. MOORE. I understand why Dr. Aziz loves it so. It is just as lovely in sunlight as it is in moonlight. (*They sit in silence a moment.*)

ADELA. Those statues in the garden are remarkable.

MRS. MOORE. But they upset you, didn't they?

ADELA. No. Not really.

MRS. MOORE. More so even than the cobra.

ADELA. The cobra didn't upset me. The statues... they didn't upset me. Not exactly. Startled, perhaps. I don't know... (*To the audience.*) Adela has been reminded of something her aunt had said to her before she left England:

"Ronald Heslop may very well be your only chance for marriage and children, Adela, your 2,000 pounds a year notwithstanding. You must be very careful not to let this opportunity slip away." She had laughed it off then, but her aunt's inference is clear, and the comment has been haunting her ever since. Is her income her only drawing card? As a practical girl she is not opposed to playing that card, but as a romantic one she fervently hopes she has more to offer than a substantial yearly income. (*To Mrs. Moore.*)

What you said in the carriage the other day, that we're no closer to understanding each other despite centuries of... carnal embracement, I believe is how you put it?

MRS. MOORE. I rather thought that might have agitated you.

ADELA. Carnal embracement. So succinct. I've been a fool. And I think, no, I have definitely decided. I will stay and I will marry Ronny. But I don't feel a bit excited. Just ordinary.

MRS. MOORE. Ordinary is by far the best way to be feeling.

ADELA. I expect it is. (*They sit in silence a while.*)

MRS. MOORE. Something has changed in you, Adela. I can sense it.

ADELA. I don't think I've changed. ... It's just... It frightens me to contemplate my future in so restrictive a world as this.

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MRS. MOORE. The world is rarely what frightens us. We frighten ourselves with our desires. It's time we go back, or Mrs. Turton will be sending the hounds to look for us.

ADELA. Yes. *(They get up to leave.)*

MRS. MOORE. I suppose your decision will make Ronny happy.

The Club.

RONNY. It does.

TURTON. Yes. Well. I suppose congratulations are in order.

MRS. TURTON. I suppose they are.

TURTON. To Ronny and Miss Quested. *(They all toast somewhat perfunctorily. Ronny gives Adela a quick, chaste peck on her cheek.)*

RONNY. *(Taking an envelope from his breast pocket and handing it to Adela.)* This came to my office this afternoon, addressed to you. From Dr. Aziz.

MRS. TURTON. *(To Adela.)* Aziz? Why would he be writing to you?

ADELA. It must be the invitation!

MRS. TURTON. Invitation?

ADELA. *(Opening the envelope.)* It is! *(To Mrs. Moore.)* He's arranging the trip for next Thursday. He is also inviting Mr. Fielding.

MRS. TURTON. Cyril Fielding? Trip?

RONNY. Dr. Aziz has proposed to take my mother and Adela to the caves at Marabar. I suggested he take Fielding along with them.

MRS. TURTON. I see. I suppose Fielding is as good a choice as any to accompany them, but frankly, Ronny, I'd feel much more comfortable if you were to go along with them.

RONNY. It's not possible, Mrs. Turton.

MRS. TURTON. There is something about that Aziz I do not trust.

MRS. MOORE. Really? I find Dr. Aziz quite charming.

MRS. TURTON. Arriving here so recently, you couldn't possibly understand, Mrs. Moore. Perhaps when you are here / longer

MRS. MOORE. *(Sharply.)* / This is not my first time in India, Mrs. Turton. Nor even my second.

MRS. TURTON. Oh no doubt. But living in India is far different than

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visiting as a tourist. One must remember that, Mrs. Moore.

MRS. MOORE. Mrs. Turton. I lived six years in India with my first husband, Colonel Heslop, before he died. Ronny was born here.

MRS. TURTON. Ronny! You've never told us that!

RONNY. Yes, Mrs. Turton. I was born in Jaipur.

MRS. TURTON. Fancy that! (*To Adela.*) Well, Miss Quested, *you* would do well to remember the Indians are not to be trusted if you intend to stay on and make yourself a member of *our* society here.

ADELA. (*Sharply.*) I don't think I will ever understand these attitudes everyone has against the natives.

MRS. TURTON. East is east, and west is west. It's a matter of culture.

ADELA. Yes, you've said that before. But then wouldn't Ronny qualify as a native, Mrs. Turton?

MRS. TURTON. He most certainly would not.

ADELA. Please explain why not?

RONNY. (*Glaring at Adela.*) In any event, I am overseeing a trial all next week, which I have had to postpone twice already. I cannot postpone it again.

MRS. TURTON. You can find someone to cover for you, can't you Ronny? Your little *truly* native assistant? Darsh? He's somewhat pukka, at least.

RONNY. His name is Das, Mrs. Turton.

MRS. TURTON. Das. Yes. Couldn't he preside in your place?

RONNY. Mahmoud Ali is the defense council. Poor Das could not possibly stand up to him; he is a force.

MRS. TURTON. Harry, please prevail upon Ronny the importance of his accompanying his mother and Miss Quested.

TURTON. Enough, Mary! Das is no doubt a good man, but he cannot be trusted to stand against Mahmoud Ali. He is relentless. They will be safe with Fielding there. Unless, of course, you'd like to go with them? (*All three ladies speak at once:*)

MRS. MOORE. I'm sure that won't be necessary.

ADELA. I'm sure Mrs. Turton has better things to do with her time.

MRS. TURTON. Harry, you know I'm making my inspection tour of the regional hospitals next Thursday!

TURTON. Yes. Well. It's settled. Mr. Fielding will chaperone the ladies and all will be well. Shall we go in to dinner, Mary?

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MRS. TURTON. (*Glaring at Adela.*) If you say so, Harry dear. (*Hissing at Mr. Turton.*) How could she possibly be interested in seeing the Marabar Caves? That girl will *never* be pukka.

AZIZ. (*To the audience.*) As the story about his invitation to the English ladies travels through both British and Indian society, Aziz pushes the matter through. It is to be stupendous replica of Fielding's tea party.

ADELA. (*To the audience.*) The ladies accept.

RONNY. (*To the audience.*) As he has promised, Ronny raises no objection and gives the undertaking his somewhat reluctant approval, providing Fielding undertakes full responsibility for the ladies' comfort and well-being.

FIELDING. (*To the audience.*) Fielding is not enthusiastic.

MRS. TURTON. (*To the audience.*) Nor are the Turtons.

TURTON. (*To the audience.*) More precisely, Mrs. Turton is not enthusiastic. Mr. Turton could not have cared less.

MRS. MOORE. (*To the audience.*) Even Mrs. Moore is only mildly enthused. Now that the question of Ronny and Adela's marriage has been settled, she is far more interested getting it all over and done with and in arranging a return to her life in England.

ADELA. (*To the audience.*) But Adela, positively giddy with excitement, is determined the adventure will take place. She replies to Dr. Aziz in the affirmative.

AZIZ. (*To the audience.*) It is not to be a long expedition – a train will leave Chandrapore just before dawn, another will bring them back in time for tea.

MAHMOUD ALI. (*To the audience.*) Mahmoud Ali believes Aziz most unwise to mix himself up with the English ladies, and while he has no real quarrel with Fielding personally – he is quite alright as far as the English go – it is the size and scope of the party that Aziz is planning which is worrying, to say nothing of the expense. (*To Aziz.*) The English are hearty eaters! Tea and sweets will not be sufficient for a full day's expedition. You cannot serve them beef; you must supply them with mutton. And vegetables. And rice. *And* tea and sweets.

AZIZ. (*To Ali.*) Then I must borrow cutlery from you.

MAHMOUD ALI. (*Teasing Aziz.*) So you will borrow my cutlery but not invite me to go along? I see how it is. And then there is the question of alcohol. I hear Mr. Fielding is a heavy drinker.

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AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* Aziz knows this to be true but will not confirm it. Ali would want to know how he knows.

MAHMOUD ALI. *(To the audience.)* Mahmoud Ali has recently begun to imagine Aziz is far more than a friend to Mr. Fielding than he admits but he does not wish to stir up a nest of trouble. He decides to stay silent. *(To Aziz.)* And we do not know if the English ladies are drinkers. I am sure they like their gin. Gin for the ladies then and whiskey sodas for Mr. Fielding, and port for after. You would be better off to pretend you never offered to do this and forget about the whole thing.

AZIZ. I cannot do that, Ali. They have been disappointed once already.

MAHMOUD ALI. And that is not your concern.

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* And so it goes, back and forth and back again, until Ali finally agrees to lend Aziz his cutlery, along with blankets and pillows for sitting on the hard, rocky ground of the Marabar hillside.

MAHMOUD ALI. *(To the audience.)* Although Mahmoud Ali does not pretend to approve; he has a fierce presentiment this will not end well for his friend. *(To Aziz.)* You tell me this English girl wants to “see the real India.” I should like to see that too.

AZIZ. Oh tosh!

MAHMOUD ALI. You know I do not trust the English. I do not like them being in our country. And I do not trust you being so friendly with those who have taken “the real India” from us.

AZIZ. You worry too much, my friend.

MAHMOUD ALI. Yes. I do, Sachin.

The Chandrapore Railway Station. Aziz, Mrs. Moore, Adela, and Fielding.

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* At last the morning arrives, and when his guests appear at the station at the ungodly hour of 5:15 in the morning he rushes to meet them, overjoyed they actually came. *(To Mrs. Moore, Fielding, and Adela.)* You have come after all! This is the happiest moment of my life.

MRS. MOORE. *(To the audience.)* The ladies were civil. At 5:15, it is not the happiest moment of their lives.

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* Well, not for Mrs. Moore, at least. Adela, nearly

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as happy as Dr. Aziz, is looking forward to enjoying herself once the bother of the early start was over.

The Marabar Caves.

FIELDING. *(To the audience.)* They arrive at the caves without incident. The day grows increasingly warmer, and by the time they reach the lower hills, the morning sun is blazing.

AZIZ. *(To Adela, Mrs. Moore, and Fielding.)* The best caves are higher up. But we will start in this one.

MRS. MOORE. I do hope I shall be alright. I do not like enclosed spaces. I made rather a fool of myself with Ronny's father in the chamber of horrors at the London Waxworks. *(Lights switch; we are in a dark cave. Aziz strikes a match and lights a lantern. The sound rumbles; the sound of their breathing and the tread of their feet on the hard ground echoes louder and louder.)* Those echoes. Oh, dear. *(“Oh dear. Oh dear. Oh dear.”)*

AZIZ. Do not worry Mrs. Moore. *(“Mrs. Moore. Mrs. Moore. Mrs. Moore.”)*

ADELA. Oh, how marvelous! *(“Marvelous. Marvelous. Marvelous.”)*

AZIZ. *(Shouting.)* MRS. MOORE! *(The echo is deafening. Mrs. Moore screams and gropes her way out of the cave, followed by Adela. Fielding holds Aziz back, sneaking a kiss. Lights switch. We are out in the blazing sun.)*

MRS. MOORE. *(To Adela.)* I don't think I shall go on to the next cave.

ADELA. But that will disappoint him so; he's taken such trouble arranging this trip for us.

MRS. MOORE. You should go, then. I don't mind staying here to rest a bit. *(Aziz and Fielding enter from the cave.)*

AZIZ. We should be moving on before the sun gets too high.

MRS. MOORE. Do forgive me, Dr. Aziz. I am rather tired; I think I shall stay here and rest. I have never been a good walker; you will all get on much better without me.

AZIZ. Dear Mrs. Moore, what does anything matter so long as you are my guest? I am very glad you are *not* coming, which sounds strange, I know, but you are treating me with true frankness, as a friend.

A PASSAGE TO INDIA

MRS. MOORE. Yes, I am your friend.

ADELA. I should stay with you.

MRS. MOORE. Don't be ridiculous, Adela. I'll be perfectly fine.

FIELDING. I'll stay with Mrs. Moore.

ADELA. Then perhaps I ought to go.

MRS. MOORE. Now go, enjoy yourselves. When you come back you will tell me all about it.

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* Miss Quested and Aziz continue up the hillside. They do not talk much; Aziz is preoccupied with thoughts of Cyril Fielding and how he wishes he were alone with him now; a quick, furtive kiss in a dark cave has merely stoked a fire that could not, should not, be fanned at the present moment.

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* And for her part, Adela is thinking about her upcoming marriage to Ronny and the serious business of her subsequent life in Chandrapore as the wife of the city magistrate. But Adela Quested enjoys facing difficulties and decides that if she can control her peevishness and neither rail against Anglo-India nor succumb to it, their married life ought to be reasonably happy. Yet as she toils over the rocks on their way up the hill, she thinks "What about love?" Does she love Ronny? No. She does not. Vexed rather than appalled, she stands still.

AZIZ. Do I take you too fast, Miss Quested?

ADELA. No, I'm alright, thank you. Please let's continue. *(We see them exploring caves, flashes of lantern light revealing extremely erotic drawings of all manner of sexual activity etched into the walls.)*

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* Aziz takes her hand and they enter another cave.

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* The touch of Aziz's hand, even through her gloves, electrifies Adela. She never feels this way on the rare occasions Ronny takes her hand. Now, she loses all sense of decorum. *(To Aziz.)* Are you married, Dr. Aziz?

AZIZ. Mrs. Moore did not tell you?

ADELA. No.

AZIZ. In giving me a daughter, my wife died.

ADELA. Oh. I am so sorry. You have a child?

AZIZ. Two sons also. They are living with my wife's mother in Srinagar.

ADELA. Oh. I see. ... Did you love your wife, Dr. Aziz?

A PASSAGE TO INDIA

AZIZ. I am sorry?

ADELA. *(To Aziz)* When you married. Did you love her?

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* Aziz is quite taken aback by her question, not just by its suddenness but also by its overly intimate nature. Had he loved his wife? They had liked each other well enough when they married, but he has always considered his marriage transactional, a dutiful son's obligation to procreate and ensure the name Aziz would continue. He had not been devastated by her death; now cloaked by the respectability of being a father and a widower, he is somewhat relieved to be free to follow his heart. Nevertheless, hoping to stop Miss Quested continuing her questions, he responds. *(To Adela.)* Yes. I loved her very much. But she is just a memory now, and I live a different life.

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* It perplexes her, this question of love in a marriage. Having admitted to herself that she does not love Ronny, ought she to break her engagement off? She is inclined to think not. It would cause so much trouble to others; besides she isn't convinced love is necessary to a successful union. If love were everything, few marriages would survive the honeymoon. But shouldn't there be both esteem and, as Mrs. Moore put it, carnal embracement? She thinks about Ronny's apparent disinclination for any physical embrace. Will that change after their marriage? Will esteem be enough if it doesn't?

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* What happens next shocks Aziz to his very core.

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* Even Adela is shocked. Perhaps it is the drawings in the caves, perhaps it is the sudden realization she is not in love with Ronny nor is she even remotely attracted to him, perhaps Mrs. Moore's questioning her somewhat overly passionate nature... *(We hear Mrs. Moore's voice.)*

MRS. MOORE. *(V.O.)* You are a romantic, Adela. I'm not sure it's such a good thing in India, my dear.

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* And something in her addled brain snaps. She has no other thought than to act on her impulses, to take a chance she knows she mustn't but has no choice but to take – whatever the consequences. *(To Aziz.)* I do not love my fiancé, Dr. Aziz... How can I say this, how can I tell you? *(Adela reaches towards Aziz, gently strokes his face, and leans in to kiss him.)*

A PASSAGE TO INDIA

AZIZ. *(To the audience.)* Aziz is not only shocked, but he is also disgusted by her appalling forwardness. He wants to tell her he is in love with someone else as well. He wants to shout CYRIL FIELDING!!! into the dark echoing caves. But he dares not.

ADELA. *(To the audience.)* What he does say, at least as far as Miss Quested is concerned, is far worse.

AZIZ. *(To Adela.)* I do not find you attractive, Miss Quested. I can never return your feelings. I am sorry. We should find Mrs. Moore and Mr. Fielding and return to Chandrapore. *(A hissing sound starts. We see Adela going from drawing to drawing, tracing them. We hear voices echoing and reverberating:)*

MRS. MOORE. *(V.O.)* Centuries of carnal embracement...

AZIZ. *(V.O.)* I do not find you attractive. I can never return your feelings. *(Adela traces a drawing of two men in a deep embrace.)*

MRS. TURTON. *(V.O.)* Oh, yes. Mr. Fielding is quite invested in befriending the Indo-Aryan Brother...

ADELA. Oh, my God. *(“Oh, my God, Oh, my God, Oh, my God.”)*

AZIZ. *(O.S.)* Miss Quested? Miss Quested!?! MISS QUESTED!?! *(“Miss Quested? Miss Quested!?! MISS QUESTED!?!” Aziz appears silhouetted against the blinding light at the mouth of the cave. Blackout.)*

END OF ACT ONE

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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