

## That Land Beyond the Waves

### Cast of Characters:

#### **1914**

Harnam Singh.....	A new immigrant to Canada , 30s
Ram Singh.....	South Asian community leader, 40s
Ali.....	Another community leader, late 20s
Bakshu.....	Cook at the community cook-house, mid 30s
Santa Singh .....	A Saw-mill worker, late 20s
Ganda Singh .....	A Saw-mill worker, late 20s
British Sergeant.....	Late 40s
Three British Policemen.	
Simran .....	Harnam's sister, late 20s (appears as a vision)
Jagroop .....	passenger on Komagata Maru, late 20s
Tarak Nath .....	A Gadar Party activist, 40s
Frances .....	British immigrant to Canada, mid 30s
Peter .....	Frances' husband. A Saw-mill owner, mid 30s
Martha.....	Frances' friend, 30s
Laurie .....	Frances' friend, late 20s
Ted .....	Laurie's husband, 30s
Dave .....	Martha's husband, 40s
Richard.....	A press reporter
Two Aboriginal men	
Six Caucasian boys who sing “White Canada Forever”	
A couple of teenagers who play catch on the beach	

#### **2014**

Sonia.....	South Asian Descent, student, early 20s.
Leona .....	Caucasian , student, early 20s.
Christine.....	Caucasian , student, early 20s.
Harjit.....	South Asian Descent Sonia's father, mid 40s
A Barrista	

### **Time and Place**

The play takes place in two time zones, 1914 and 2014. In both time zones most of the action takes place in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada. The opening scene in Act II takes place at the Waterfront in Vancouver.

### Setting

There is a round table C with three chairs around it that serves as multiple locations during the play. These locations include:

Kitchen/Dining table at Frances's house.

Kitchen/Dining table at Harjit and Sonia's house.

A picnic table at the waterfront.

There is a rectangular table L with three chairs, that serves as the location of a coffee shop.

UC is a small room that serves as Pantry in Frances' house.

There is a community cookhouse R with a couple of benches randomly placed and a slab for cooking RC. In the second act the cookhouse is replaced by the Façade of the Sikh Temple at Abbotsford.

UL is a slab that serves as a Coffee-shop service counter as well as kitchen in Frances's house.

### Act I

#### *THE LIGHTS GO UP*

*CHRISTINE is standing at the service counter of the Coffee shop.*

*SONIA and LEONA are sitting at the table; Leona is reading a book while Sonia is busy texting. Christine approaches Leona and Sonia. She is carrying a tray with three cups of coffee*

#### CHRISTINE

Here you are. Mocha supreme for Sonia and Blond Roast for you, Leona. Now you girls better tell me that you've come up with an idea for our presentation, otherwise I'm gonna charge you for this service, with the tip.

**LEONA**

I think we should go with the original plan.

**SONIA**

You mean the Komagata Maru?

**LEONA**

Yes.

**SONIA**

O, C'mon Leona. We have discussed this earlier. Komagata Maru has been done to death. Everybody knows that there was a ship with three hundred odd Indians that was sent back by the Canadian government of the time. Everybody knows about the Komagata Maru.

**CHRISTINE**

Not everybody knows about it.

**SONIA**

C'mon...even the Prime Minister has apologised for the incident.

**LEONA**

Not everybody knows who the Prime Minister is. Right Christine?

**CHRISTINE**

Oh Shut up, wise ass.

**SONIA**

I don't think Komagata Maru story has any juice left. People have written plays on it, documentaries have been made, books have been written, reports published. Trust me, you can't get an 'A' if you make a presentation on the Komagata Maru.

**CHRISTINE**

So we'll get a 'B'. What's the big deal?

**SONIA**

It is a big deal. I must get an 'A' in this course.

**CHRISTINE**

Why?

**SONIA**

Cuz that's what I want. And if Professor Smith yawns once during our presentation, he'll not give us an 'A' and trust me Komagata Maru is so overdone.

**CHRISTINE**

I don't think you should be concerned about Professor Smith's yawns. After all it's an early morning class. Half of the people are yawning in any case.

**LEONA**

OK Sonia... if you think everybody knows everything about Komagata Maru, maybe we should try to find another topic.

**CHRISTINE:**

Isn't that why we came here in the first place, and FYI, I don't know everything about Komagata Maru except that a bunch of Indians were refused entry by the Canadian government.

**LEONA**

(looking at her computer)

That's a long list of books that have been written on the topic. That should come in handy for secondary sources.

**CHRISTINE**

That should make Professor Smith happy.

**SONIA**

Leona.....?

**LEONA**

Hey Sonia...What is the meaning of gadaar?

**SONIA**

I don't know. What about it?

**LEONA**

Here it says that the Komagata Maru incident played an important role in motivating and organizing Indian revolutionaries who later on launched an independence movement called gadaar.

**SONIA**

Spell it.

**LEONA**

G-A-D-A-R.

**SONIA**

That's Gadar. It's the name of a Bollywood movie.

**LEONA**

And was this movie made in 1915 with Indian revolutionaries playing the lead?

**SONIA**

What are you talking about? What has the movie got to do with Indian revolutionaries?

**CHRISTINE**

Are we going to include a Bollywood movie in our presentation? Cool.

**LEONA**

No. We are not going to include a Bollywood movie in our South Asian Diaspora History presentation. I just came across this reference that connects a 1915 freedom movement in India with the Komagata Maru and thought maybe Sonia could throw some light on it.

**SONIA**

What is your point?

**LEONA**

My point is that Komagata Maru may have been (makes air quotes) done to death, but you don't know everything about it. Neither do I.

**CHRISTINE**

Don't even look at me.

**LEONA**

And it'll be the same with Professor Smith and the rest of the class. There might be tens of books on the topic but I'm certain none of my family members have read any. Christine?

**CHRISTINE**

I said don't look at me.

**LEONA**

And what about you Sonia? Or your brother Inder for that matter? Have you read any? Do you guys have a book on Komagata Maru in your house?

**SONIA**

All right...you can go easy on the sarcasm. I get your point.

**LEONA**

Good. So here's what I propose. Let's spend some time exploring the topic and if we can find an angle to the story that could give us an 'A', we'll go ahead and do it.

**CHRISTINE**

When you say spend some time, you mean like now?

**LEONA**

Of course.

**CHRISTINE**

(grabbing the computer).

OK...

**LEONA**

Not on the computer, Google Brain.

**CHRISTINE**

Then how?

**LEONA**

We'll go the old fashioned way (takes out a bunch of books from her bag).

**SONIA**

(Browsing the books)

Leona, you are cunning. You came prepared.

**CHRISTINE**

(Selecting a book)

I'll take this one. It's got the maximum pics.

**LEONA**

OK...take it. Read it tonight. And you too Sonia. Pick one, any one, and read it cover to cover and we'll meet here tomorrow at seven and if we still feel that this story is not worth making a presentation on..

**CHRISTINE**

(interrupting)

Then we'll make one on a Bollywood movie

**SONIA**

Yeah. Professor Smith will surely give you an 'A' for that.

**CHRISTINE**

What's this obsession with the 'A'?

**LEONA**

Yeah. Stop being so uptight Sonia. You'll never get a boyfriend that way.

**CHRISTINE**

Yeah. Guys are afraid to approach smart 'A' girls.

**SONIA**

I don't need any guy approaching me.



**LEONA**

Why? Has your Dad found one for you in India?

**SONIA**

Oh Shut up Leona.

(END OF SCENE)

*LIGHTS ON TABLE C: Sonia's house.*

*As lights come on, Sonia is seen standing near the slab fixing two plates of dinner. Her books are lying on the table She carries the plates to the table.*

**SONIA**

Dad, Dinner's ready.

**HARJIT**

(O.S)

I am coming.

**SONIA**

(starts texting)

*Enter HARJIT*

**HARJIT**

How many times I have told you not to bring your cell-phone to the dinner table.

**SONIA**

I am not texting. I mean I am. But it's not for fun. It's school related.

**HARJIT**

(rolling his eyes like a teenager)

Whatever.

**SONIA**

O, C'mon Dad.

**HARJIT**

No texting while you are eating.

**SONIA**

I thought the rule was no talking while eating.

**HARJIT**

Yes, that rule was applicable when kids used to talk.

**SONIA**

You mean to say I don't talk.

**HARJIT**

Not as much as I would want you to.

**SONIA**

Really. OK. What do you wanna talk about?

**HARJIT**

Anything. Like what did you do this evening?

**SONIA**

I was at the Coffee shop with Christine and Leona. We are working on a presentation.

**HARJIT**

I don't understand this Canadian concept of studying at coffee shops. In our days, we used to go to the parks to study (picks up the newspaper).

**SONIA**

So you want me to go to a park in this wet B.C. weather to study?

**HARJIT**

(reading the newspaper)

That's not the point.

**SONIA**

Why are you reading the newspaper now? I thought you wanted to talk.

**HARJIT**

I am talking.

**SONIA**

While reading the newspaper?

**HARJIT**

I am multi-tasking. What assignment were you girls working on?

**SONIA**

We are planning to make a presentation about the Komagata Maru incident. Do you know something about it?

**HARJIT**

Of course. Everybody, at least every Indo-Canadian knows about it. There was this Japanese ship Komagata Maru that came to Vancouver and the racist goras didn't allow it to land.

SONIA

And?

HARJIT

And the ship went back to India.

SONIA

That's it?

HARJIT

Pretty much. Of course the passengers must have suffered a lot. The government recently apologised for the incident. I thought that was a nice gesture.

SONIA

So what happened to those who went back?

HARJIT

I don't know. I believe they were all Punjabis so they must have gone back to Punjab. But I don't really know. Who knows?

SONIA

(Showing him the book)

That's something I intend to find out tonight.

HARJIT

Good luck with that. I got an early shift tomorrow. So, good night.

SONIA

Good Night Dad.

*(Exit Harjit. Sonia opens the book and reads aloud)*

*while lights slowly fade.)*

## SONIA

On September 26, 2014, Komagata Maru reached the coast of British India. The authorities feared that the ship was carrying seditious material and elements. They searched the ship for three days and when they found nothing of consequence, they ordered the ship to go to the port of Budge Budge, about seventy miles from Calcutta from where they were ordered to board a train to Punjab. The passengers, who were penniless by now, didn't want to go to Punjab. Rather, they wanted to stay in Calcutta and find some sort of employment there. They decided to walk to Calcutta in the form a procession carrying the holy Guru Granth Sahib to a Sikh temple in Calcutta. They gathered at Budge Budge Station for prayer and Ardas.

Lights go off Sonia.

*General lighting DC/DR reveals three gun-wielding policemen who are standing facing the audience. We hear a voice reciting Kirtan followed by Ardas.*

## VOICE

(O.S)

Ek Omkar, Satnam, Karta Purakh Nirbhau, Nirvair, Akal Murat....

Enter Sergeant.

## SERGEANT

What in the name of the lord is going on here?

## POLICEMAN 1

Sir, I believe these people are praying.

**SERGEANT**

Praying? Are They? Here, at this god-forsaken shit-hole of a place? They are bloody making a fool out of you.

**POLICEMAN 2**

Pardon my audacity sir, but who are these people and what are they doing here at Budge Budge.

**SERGEANT**

If you must know, these are a bunch of revolutionaries, mutineers, who went to Canada on board Komagata Maru. They were refused entry and now they have come back to India with hopes of achieving what the likes of them could not achieve in 1857.

**POLICEMAN 3**

Do you mean mutiny, Sir?

**SERGEANT**

Yes. Another one. And who knows in this so called prayer of theirs they might be praying for the success of their plan. And do you have any idea what that means for us, the British? Every white man brutally murdered, every white woman raped and forced to produce the likes of them. So stop asking these stupid questions and follow the orders. (Calling out) Hey! All of you. Get on the train.

**VOICE**

(O.S)

But this train goes to Punjab. None of us wants to go to Punjab. We want to go to Calcutta.

**SERGEANT**

None of you is going to Calcutta. Do you hear that? Now you get on that train right now, otherwise I might have to use force.

**VOICE**

(O.S.)

Let us at least finish our prayers.

**SERGEANT**

To hell with your prayers. On the count of three, if you don't start boarding, you will be shot down. (to policemen) Take positions.

**POLICEMAN 1**

Sir, it will be a massacre. These people are like sitting ducks.

**SERGEANT**

Well, then go hunting. One, two.

*Policeman 2 moves towards the audience.*

**SERGEANT**

Where on earth are you going?

**POLICEMAN 2**

Sir, there's a child among them. (Exits through the audience).

**SERGEANT**

Fire.

*The Sergeant and the two policemen point their guns towards the audience. Total darkness on stage. Sounds of gun shots for forty five seconds to one minute.*

(END OF SCENE)

*The Lights go up on the Coffee shop. Sonia, Christine and Leona are a sitting. The books are piled up on the table.*

**CHRISTINE**

How could they do this? I mean it's atrocious. It's inhuman...it's sick. That's what it is. It is sick.

**SONIA**

It's colonialism.

**CHRISTINE**

I feel so bad. I am sick to my stomach.

**LEONA**

Yes. It is disgusting. Firing at unarmed, tired, dejected and rejected passengers of Komagata Maru barely a few hours after they landed in India is insane and yes Christine..it is sick. I'm not sure if I want to pursue this angle for our presentation. It is too horrible.

**CHRISTINE**

Me neither.

**SONIA**

You have some other angle in mind?

**LEONA**

Actually, quite a few. For instance, these people, the ones on board the Komagata Maru weren't the first ones to come to Canada from India.



Right?

**SONIA**

No they were not. There were a few thousand Indo-Canadians living in Canada at that time. Majority of them lived in Vancouver and the lower mainland.

**LEONA**

And barely anyone had his family with him.

**CHRISTINE**

They were not allowed.

**SONIA**

A couple of exceptions here and there but generally they were all men.

**LEONA**

And certainly they could not marry white women. (beat) Don't you think it's a unique scenario of male bonding?

(END OF SCENE)

*The lights on the coffee shop go off and they go up on the community cook-house. BAKSHU is sitting there cooking food.*

*SANTA SINGH is sitting on a bench with a piece of paper in his hand. He is sobbing and repeatedly wipes his nose with the loose end of his turban. GANDA SINGH comes to him with a cup of tea in his hand.*

**GANDA**

Oye Santeya...What happened...Kyon moonh latka ke baitha hain? Is everything alright?

(Santa doesn't respond; but his sobs acquire a renewed energy)

**GANDA**

Oye, be a man, why are you crying like a woman? Tell me what happened?  
(Santa shows him the piece of paper)

**GANDA**

What's this?

**SANTA**

You don't know what's this? It's a telegram.

**GANDA**

Waheguru ! Is everything alright?

**SANTA**

Didn't you hear me? I said it's a telegram. Has a telegram ever brought good news?

**GANDA**

You are right. Once my neighbour, you know, Gurnam, Chhaju's uncle's son. You remember him right? He came to Canada but was deported.

**SANTA**

Ya...I remember...and I know the Immigrant tax story of Gurnam...You have told it a million times.

**GANDA**

Yes..the same Gurnam, once he received a telegram (pause) in English.

**SANTA**

In English?

**GANDA**

Yes, it was the government

**SANTA**

What did it say?

**GANDA**

I don't exactly remember, but it was terrible news. Gurnam had to stay away from his home for a very long time. Terrible news.

**SANTA**

I'm sure my telegram also has some terrible news. I am so far away from my home. What if there's been a flood, or a fire, or Waheguru na kare, something's happened to my mother. I'm so far away, I can't do anything (sobs).

**GANDA**

(joining in with the sobs)

Don't cry yaar....Let me read it

**SANTA**

Can you read?

**GANDA**

No. But Bakshu can! Oye Bakshu!

**BAKSHU**

What's it?

**GANDA**

Come here brother, we need your help. Santa is in big trouble.

**BAKSHU**

Why? What happened?

**GANDA**

He's got a telegram from home.

**BAKSHU**

Khuda Khair Kare. That can't be good news.

**SANTA**

I know

**GANDA**

Can you please read it for him?

**BAKSHU**

Sure. Show me.

*Ganda hands over the telegram to Bakshu. Santa covers his face in his haunches.*

**GANDA**

Hausla rakh Santeya

**BAKSHU**

Ya Allah. It's in Hindi.

**GANDA**

In Hindi? Are you sure?

**BAKSHU**

I think so. That looks like Hindi.

**GANDA**  
(To Santa)

Who in your village knows Hindi?

**SANTA**

I don't know. Lala is the only educated man in our village. He has studied upto Grade III. But he only knows the Landa language. Then there's the Bhai at the Gurdwara, but he doesn't know Hindi.

**BAKSHU**

First, a telegram, and that too in Hindi. Ya Allah! You are the merciful one.

**SANTA**

Why don't you read it?

**BAKSHU**

I surely will. My Hindi is not so good, but I'll try.

*Santa is getting inconsolable*

**BAKSHU**

*(reads the telegram)*

That's bad news.

**SANTA**

What does it say?

**BAKSHU**

It says, Maa mar gayi. Your mother died.

**SANTA**

Haye Maa.....Ni tu kithe chali gayi. Tainu vekh vi na sakiya aakhri vaar.  
What's the fun of living in this far off country and making all this money  
If I couldn't be with my mother when she closed her eyes.

*Everyone around starts weeping.*

*Enter Ali*

*Santa lets out a long, loud wail.*

**ALI**

Oye! What happened?

**GANDA**

Ask what hasn't happened?

**ALI**

OK. What hasn't happened?

**GANDA**

Nothing good has happened. Santa has lost his mother.

**ALI**

Oh my God! When? How?

**SANTA**

Bakshu...show him the telegram.

**GANDA**

Even before Bakshu read it, we knew it was bad news. Has a telegram ever brought good news?

**BAKSHU AND SANTA**

Never

**ALI**

Did you say Bakshu read it?

**BAKSHU**

Yes, and it was not easy. You see, it's in Hindi.

**ALI**

(snatches the telegram from Bakshu)

**BAKSHU**

You can read. It's clearly written Maa mar gayi.

**ALI**

(reads the telegram)

You fool. How many times I've told to buy a pair of glasses.

**SANTA**

Why? What happened?

**ALI**

The telegram doesn't say Maa mar gayi. Your mother hasn't died.

**BAKSHU**

It doesn't?

**SANTA**

Then what does it say?

**ALI**

It says Gaa mar gayi, not maa mar gayi. Your cow has died, not your mother.

**SANTA**

Really! Waheguru tera lakh lakh shukar hai.

**GANDA**

Well, somebody died. I told you a telegram never brings good news.

**SANTA**

I need something to drown the sorrow.

**ALI**

Of losing your mother?

**SANTA**

Of losing my cow. And you know for Hindus, cow is like mother. Come Ganda Singh, let's go inside, drown our sorrows.

**GANDA**

You are right brother, in times like this she is our only companion.

(Exit Santa and Ganda)

**BAKSHU**

Saaley, they just need a reason to drink. Khushi ho ya gham, khoob piyenge hum.

**ALI**

Bakshu, is the food ready?



**BAKSHU**

It'll take some time.

**ALI**

Then go and cook it, instead of wasting your time in idle woman-talk.

**BAKSHU**

What to do? We don't have any women here, so we have to do everything that women would do, cook , wash clothes, clean dishes, mop floors, and do the woman talk.

**ALI**

*(sternly)*

Go and prepare the food.

**BAKSHU**

All right, all right. Angry man (goes back to the kitchen area).

*Enter Santa and Ganda. Santa has a bottle of whisky in his hands.*

**SANTA**

*(singing)*

Haye O Rabba...nahiyo lagda dil mera.

Nahiyo lagada dil mera.

**GANDA**

Sajna baaj hoya hanera

**SANTA AND GANDA**

Hai O Rabba ...Nahiyo Lagda dil Mera.

**ALI**

Lo Aa gaye saley talli ho ke.

**SANTA**

My mother is alive so I am happy.

**GANDA**

I am his friend, and his mother is alive, so I am happy.

*Bakshu brings a dhol and Santa and Ganda do an improv Bhangra*

*Enter RAM SINGH AND HARNAM SINGH. Harnam Singh is wearing a garland of flowers.*

*The Bhangra stops.*

**RAM SINGH**

Brothers, I want you meet Harnam Singh of Village Sarhali, Amritsar. Harnam was one of the thirty nine Indian passengers on the ship Panama Maru. I would like to welcome him to Abbotsford and am happy that he has decided to live here with us in the Fraser Valley.

**ALI**

Welcome brother Harnam. It's great to have you here. You must have suffered a lot in prison while waiting for the court's decision.

**HARNAM**

Thank you Brothers! Thank you for this warm welcome. And yes you are right, the prison was awful. I felt like a caged bird whose wings have been clipped. Still worse was the wait and uncertainty; not knowing what will happen to us. Will be allowed to come to Canada or will be sent back to face poverty and humiliation in India? You know one has to sell practically all of his possession to make this journey and if the venture fails, then one is left with nothing to survive on. It's a life of shame and utter disgrace.

ALI

Well, thankfully that didn't happen. Our lawyer, Mr. Edward Bird prepared a superb case and your Habeas Corpus petition was accepted and here you are, with us. It's time to celebrate.

*They all start Bhangra.*

(END OF SCENE)

*The lights go up on Kitchen/dining table in the house of Frances and Peter. Martha, Frances and Laurie, dressed in 1914 evening dresses, are sitting around it having tea.*

MARTHA

Did you notice the length of Linda's skirt today at the church?

LAURIE

Linda always had a horrible sense of fashion.

MARTHA

And make-up

LAURIE

Well. You can't blame the woman for showing her ankles. After all her face hasn't attracted any man so far.

HARNAM SINGH

(O.S.)

Firewood man.

FRANCES

Ah! There's the firewood man. I'm sorry ladies, I'll have to let him through

the main door. Peter is yet to fix the rear entrance.

**MARTHA**

That's all right dear.

*Frances goes to the door and re-enters with Harnam Singh. Harnam is wearing crumpled trousers and a coarse coat. He is carrying the sack of Firewood on his back. He has a flowing beard. His turban is tightly wound around his head although it is not very smartly tied.*

*Harnam bows courteously to the ladies and Frances leads him to the pantry.*

**MARTHA**

(wrinkling her nose)

I hope Peter fixes that door soon.

**LAURIE**

You're mean.

*Re-enter Harnam and Frances.*

**FRANCES**

(Frances gives Harnam some money)

Here, and thank you for your trouble.

**HARNAM**

Thank you Madam.

*Exit Harnam*

**MARTHA**

That man reeked.

**LAURIE**

Oh cut it out Martha. You're mean.

**MARTHA**

I might be. But he reeked. Frances dear, do you have some incense sticks or something.

**FRANCES**

Now, you are exaggerating.

**MARTHA**

Don't tell me you didn't smell anything. You sure need to get those sinuses unblocked.

**FRANCES**

Thanks. I am trying to do the best I can.

**LAURIE**

He did smell peculiar.

**MARTHA**

You may call it peculiar, for me, he reeked.

**LAURIE**

I think this peculiar odour might be due to his country of origin. Probably that's why they say that the Hindu race is inassimilable in the cold climate of Canada. I'm sure they wouldn't smell like this in their home country.

**MARTHA**

I bet they do. That's why their wives don't come with them. They'll be saying, good riddance, skunk.

**FRANCES**

They are not permitted to bring their wives with them

**MARTHA**

Good for us. Good for Canada. Imagine the likes of him settling here permanently and procreating more the likes of him.

**LAURIE**

That's why they are not allowing any more Hindus into Canada. After all Canada is and should always be a White Man's country.

**MARTHA**

Amen to that. And now before my white nostrils burst by this Hindu smell, let's go for a walk and get some fresh air.

**FRANCES**

You girls go ahead. I think I'll stay home. The sinuses are a bit aggravated today. Maybe I'll inhale some steam.

**LAURIE**

That's a shame. It's such a glorious day. The weather has been awesome lately. The driest spell I have seen in a long time.

**FRANCES**

I would certainly like to join you but...

**MARTHA**

(interrupting)

Don't stress yourself. I think steam should do you some good. Have a good evening dear.

**LAURIE**

Good evening.

**FRANCES**

Enjoy your walk.

*Exit Martha and Laurie*

*Frances starts picking up the cups and dishes. She puts a kettle on stove to boil water. There is a knock on the door.*

**FRANCES**

Who is this?

**HARNAM**

(O.S.)

Firewood Man.

**FRANCES**

Please come in. The door's open

*Enter Harnam*

**HARNAM**

I am sorry Madam. Did I disturb you?

**FRANCES**

No. Not really. What is it?

**HARNAM**

When I reached the next block, I realized that you have given me more money than required. I gave you two dollars worth of wood but you gave

me two dollars and fifty cents. I came to give fifty cents back.

**FRANCES**

Oh, But that was supposed to be a tip.

**HARNAM**

A tip?

**FRANCES**

A sort of a thank you for your services. You did put the sack of wood in the store.

**HARNAM**

But you said thank you.

**FRANCES**

Yes, but giving a tip is a gesture, a thank you gesture. You can keep the fifty cents.

**HARNAM**

I am sorry, but I can't. I can only take what I deserve to take. Delivering firewood is my job and that firewood was worth two dollars and two dollars is what I should take. I hope you don't get angry.

**FRANCES**

I am not angry. Somewhat amused, yes, but not angry.

**HARNAM**

Thanks. You see I am very new in this country so I don't know a lot about its customs.

**FRANCES**

Well. Then this is an important custom. It is customary to tip for a service



and it is polite to keep the tip. So you should keep the fifty cents.

**HARNAM**

OK...I don't want to be impolite. So I will keep the fifty cents.

**FRANCES**

How long have you been here in Canada?

**HARNAM**

A few months. Do you remember the Panama Maru ship case?

**FRANCES**

I don't think I have heard of it.

**HARNAM**

Thirty nine of us came by that ship and the British Columbia government kept us as prisoners in Victoria saying that we will be sent back to India. But thanks to Mr. Edward Bird, our lawyer, do you know him?

**FRANCES**

I don't think I do.

**HARNAM**

Mr. Bird filed a Habeas Corpus petition on our behalf and the court allowed us to enter Canada.

**FRANCES**

And this happened a few months ago?

**HARNAM**

Yes.

FRANCES

I should read the newspaper more regularly. I want to, but my sinuses give me such headaches that (pause) anyway, thanks again.

HARNAM

Do you have sinus problem?

FRANCES

Sinuses, allergies, you name it. But we can't do much about them can we? Well thank you very much. I think I'll need some rest now.

HARNAM

Oh sure Madam. I am leaving now. Thank you for teaching me about the Canadian customs.

FRANCES

You're welcome. Have a good day.

HARNAM

Good day Madam.

*Exit Harnam*

*The water boils. Frances picks up the kettle and exits.*

(END OF SCENE)

*Lights go up on the cook-house.  
A wrestling match is about to begin. Harnam and Ganda are preparing to wrestle. Ram Singh is immaculately dressed and sitting on a chair whereas, Santa, Ali and Bakshu are sitting on benches. The*

*match starts. Harnam Singh manages to pin down Ganda. Everyone applauds. Ram Singh stands up.*

**RAM**

Well done, Harnam. That was great. Ganda Singh, you fought well. Better luck next time. (addresses the gathering) Brothers, I've got news for you.

**ALI**

What news?

**RAM**

(Takes a paper out of his pocket)

I've received this telegram.

**SANTA**

Another telegram!

**BAKSHU**

Khuda Khair kare.

**GANDA**

It's definitely bad news.

**RAM**

It's not bad news. It's good news.

**ALI**

But what is the news?

**RAM**

Inspired by the success of Panama Maru case, that brought Harnam and thirty eight of our people to Canada, a businessman in Singapore called

Gurdit Singh has chartered a Japanese ship called Komagata Maru and set sail for Canada with more than 300 passengers on board. Isn't that good news?

#### GANDA

It's big news for sure. I am not sure if it is good news or bad.

#### HARNAM

Ganda Singh is right. The immigration people have become more vigilant after the Panama Maru episode. And this ship is carrying Indian passengers but it's coming from Singapore and Hong Kong, so it violates the continuous journey legislation and Hopkinson and Reid will cause all sorts of problems.

#### ALI

The continuous journey clause is humbug. Everybody knows that it is impossible to travel from India to Canada without stopping at various ports on the way for food and fuel. The courts will never accept this completely illogical and insane clause in the immigration laws.

#### RAM

I agree with Ali. If there is one thing the British are known for all over the world, it is the fairness of their legal system that treats all the citizens as equal. Harnam Singh's presence among us is a classic example of this. Another good news is that there are a few women and children on board the Komagata Maru.

#### ALI

This can mean trouble. Member of Parliament Stevens and the immigration people will never allow our families to come to Canada.

#### RAM

People like Stevens, Hopkinson, and Reid are always saying or doing something or the other to discourage the immigration of Indians to Canada.

**ALI**

They have this weird notion of Canada being a white man's country.

**RAM**

But the courts have usually ruled against such racist laws and I am sure that we will be welcoming the passengers of Komagata Maru in less than a month.

**ALI**

Inshallah!

**SANTA**

Jo Bole So Nihal.

**EVERYBODY**

Sat sri Akal.

*All exit except Ram Singh and Harnam*

**RAM**

Harnam. I have got a special news for you.

**HARNAM**

Special news?

**RAM**

Yes. One of the women passengers on Komagata Maru goes by the name of Harsimran Kaur.

**HARNAM**

Is that true? You are not joking? Please say that this is true.

**RAM**

This is true. I didn't want to reveal in front of everybody. Gurdit Singh has specifically mentioned this. After all he is from your village, Sarhali.

**HARNAM**

Oh! This is so wonderful. Thank you. Waheguru! Thank you.

(END OF SCENE)

*Lights go up on Frances house.*

*Frances is sitting at the table having tea. A mellow symphony plays on the gramophone.*

**HARNAM**

(O.S.)

Firewood man.

*Frances stands, lowers the volume on the Gramophone. Goes towards door and lets Harnam in. Harnam places the bag of wood on the floor.*

**FRANCES**

Here you can place it right beside the grain-sack (pays him the money) and thank you for your trouble.

**HARNAM**

(looks at the money)

Thank you for the tip madam (hesitates).

**FRANCES**

Is there something else?

**HARNAM**

No Madam. Nothing. I should go.

**FRANCES**

Do you want to say something? Go ahead.

**HARNAM**

I just wanted to ask you how are your sinuses?

**FRANCES**

My sinuses! They are the same as they have been for many years. Sometimes blocked, sometimes running....

**HARNAM**

Oh! If you don't mind, I can give you something to cure them.

**FRANCES**

You have a cure for my sinuses?

**HARNAM**

My mother used to give it to me when I was young. My nose was always running. So she would boil some herbs in water and give it to me. It tasted awful, but it worked. Would you like to try it?

**FRANCES**

Do you have those herbs?

**HARNAM**

Yes, I do. I carried some with them when I left India. They said Canada was

a cold country and I thought they will help me if my nose started running again in this cold. But I have had no problems as such. I find this weather very healthy. It is clouded most of the time and it rains a lot. I love it.

**FRANCES**

You love the rains?

**HARNAM**

Yes. Don't you.

**FRANCES**

Not really. I am more of a Sun person. Rains depress me.

**HARNAM**

Oh! Then you must be finding it very difficult to live here.

**FRANCES**

Well it is OK. Not an ideal place I believe but you learn to survive, right?

**HARNAM**

Would you like to try those herbs? I am sure I won't need them. The weather here suits me very well. I feel healthier than I used to feel back home in India.

**FRANCES**

Good for you. I am glad to hear that. And yes I will not mind trying those herbs. Do you think you can spare some?

**HARNAM**

Very gladly madam (takes out a packet from his pocket). Here. Boil them in water. Keep boiling till the water is half its volume and then filter it and drink it twice a day. You can add sugar if you find it too bitter.



**FRANCES**

Thank you. I appreciate it. (takes some money out of her purse) Here.

**HARNAM**

Oh no Madam! I can't take money for that.

**FRANCES**

But..

**HARNAM**

Please Madam. I will not take money for this. I insist.

**FRANCES**

Very well. Then wait a minute. (She goes to the Kitchen and packs some cookies in a packet and comes back). Here I insist that you take these cookies. I am sure you'll enjoy it.

**HARNAM**

Thank you madam. You are very kind. (he is beaming and there is a spring in his step). I should go now.

**FRANCES**

Wait a minute. There is something more isn't it? Do you have something else to say?

**HARNAM**

Well..madam.. I am very happy today.

**FRANCES**

I can see that.

**HARNAM**

I would like to share good news with you, if you don't mind.

**FRANCES**

Good news? Go ahead. Tell me.

**HARNAM**

Well. A Japanese ship, Komagata Maru, carrying Indian passengers is coming to Canada and among those passengers is my sister, Harsimran Kaur. I haven't seen my sister for almost a year. I am so happy that she is coming to Canada.

**FRANCES**

I am happy for you. You will meet your sister shortly.

**HARNAM**

Yes, and her child, my nephew will meet his uncle shortly.

**FRANCES**

That's wonderful.

**HARNAM**

I should leave now. Thanks for talking with me. I just hope that they don't face the kind of troubles that I faced. It'll be terrible if she has to spend time in the prison the way I had to before the court allowed me to enter Canada.

**FRANCES**

Don't you worry. I am sure nothing of the sort will happen. Canada is a very big country. It has room for everyone.

*Exit Harnam.*

(END OF SCENE)

*Lights Downstage.*

*Waterfront at Vancouver:*

*People of all races including two well-dressed Sikhs are walking about and enjoying the bright evening.*

*A newspaper boy comes rushing in.*

### NEWSPAPER BOY

Extra, Extra. Read all about it. Hindu invasion of Canada. A Japanese ship carrying one thousand Hindus coming to Vancouver. Extra, Extra. Read all about it.

*People buy newspaper. They segregate into different ethnic groups while reading the paper. The largest group is of about six white young men, who after reading the paper move about the stage staring threateningly at people of other ethnicities especially at the Sikhs and form a parade formation DC and start the chanty of "White Canada Forever".*

### BOYS

Then let us stand united all  
And show our father's might  
That won the home we call our own  
For white man's land we fight.  
To Oriental grasp and greed  
We'll surrender, no never  
Our watchword be God Save the King  
White Canada forever

*All the other groups exit stage. The boys are the last to exit.*

*The chanty continues off stage for some time.*

(END OF SCENE)

*Lights on Frances' House. PETER is having tea and reading the newspaper. Frances is at the kitchen counter wiping water off the dishes.*

**FRANCES**

Peter. You need to mow the lawn today dear. The grass is up to my knees now.

**PETER**

Right after I finish this cup of tea.(a beat) Did you read this dear?

**FRANCES**

What?

**PETER**

A Japanese ship by the name of Komagata Maru is bringing a thousand Hindus to British Columbia. The press is calling it the Hindu invasion of Canada.

**FRANCES**

I didn't know the ship was carrying a thousand passengers.

**PETER**

Did you know about the ship?

**FRANCES**

Yes. Our firewood man told me about it. His sister is on that ship. He was very excited.

**PETER**

Since when did you start getting friendly with firewood men?

**FRANCES**

Oh Peter! Don't be ridiculous. He is not my friend. But he is nice fellow. He brought me herbs to cure my sinuses.

**PETER**

A Hindu brought you herbs to cure your sinuses? What is going on in this house?

**FRANCES**

What is the big deal? I thought you were fond of the Hindus. You employ them at your mill.

**PETER**

I employ them because they are very hard workers. They work twice as much as an average white man at almost half the wages. They are good for my business. But I am most definitely not fond of them. You are not planning to use those herbs, are you? Because who knows what is in them. They might be poisonous. Don't tell me you have already used them.

**FRANCES**

No dear. I took it from him for the sake of being polite. And then threw them in the garbage. (goes behind the kitchen counter) See there is that packet. Come take a look.

**PETER**

(unwilling to move)

It's all right. Just try not be friendly with these people. They are not our kind. And bloody hell, a thousand more of them coming.

**FRANCES**

A thousand on board! That must be a massive ship.

**PETER**

It'll be in the harbour in a few days. You can go to Vancouver and take a look. Ask Henry. He might even arrange a tour for you.

**FRANCES**

That's an excellent idea. I'll talk to Martha and Laurie. Maybe we can arrange a picnic. The weather is glorious. Would you join us if Ted and Dave were to come?

**PETER**

And do what? Go to a bar while you women go shopping in Vancouver.

**FRANCES**

I promise. No shopping. We'll set up a table on the beach and play bridge.

**PETER**

With six people?

**FRANCES**

OK... We'll play Whist.

**PETER**

Or poker?

**FRANCES**

Or both?

**PETER**

OK.. I think I can use a day off from work.

**FRANCES**

Sounds good. I'll make the arrangements. Do you think the ship will be in the harbour by this weekend.

**PETER**

(stands up)

I guess so. If not then make plans for the next weekend.

**FRANCES**

Where are you going dear?

**PETER**

To the bedroom. For a nap.

**FRANCES**

What about the lawn.

**PETER**

I'll do that tomorrow.

*Exit Peter*

**FRANCES**

But Peter, the grass is already up to my knees. (to herself) Never mind. (picks up the newspaper and reads. While reading it she comes downstage. The lights fade out on the table. A potlight on Frances).

**FRANCES**

(reading)

Four centuries ago, a ship sailed westwards from Europe to reach India and now a ship is sailing Eastwards from India to reach the western world. The general impression among the public and the government is that the Hindu migration to Canada should be stopped with immediate effect if Canada is to remain a white man's country. It will be apt to quote Kipling here who said 'East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet.

(END OF SCENE)

*Coffee-shop. Lights go up on the Table. Christine, Leona and Sonia are sitting.*

**CHRISTINE**

East is East and West is West, And never the twain shall meet. Boy, that Kipling was a real nut case.

**LEONA**

You can't blame him. His vision was limited. He could hardly see beyond the jungle.

**SONIA**

But when Komagata Maru came to Canada, the Canadian Immigration Department seemed to agree with him totally. They didn't want the twain to meet.

**LEONA**

Obviously they failed. (pointing to the three of them) The twain has met and gelled pretty well.



**CHRISTINE**

Talking about meeting of twains, how are things between you and Josh, Leona?

**LEONA**

I think we came here to talk about the assignment. So no boys talk.

**CHRISTINE**

O, C'mon Leona. We're at a Coffee-shop. Three girls and a computer. We've discussed our assignment for thirty minutes. Now's the time for boy-talk. That's the (thinking hard) what's the word?

**SONIA**

System?

**CHRISTINE**

No.

**SONIA**

Deal?

**CHRISTINE**

No. The word for doing things in a pre-decided, organized way.

**LEONA**

Protocol?

**CHRISTINE**

Protocol. Exactly. That is the protocol.

**LEONA**

What business is yours what happens between me and Josh?

CHRISTINE

Cuz we are curious to see.

LEONA

See what?

SONIA

Whether the twain shall meet or not?

LEONA

Sonia? Et tu?

SONIA

We can take a break.

CHRISTINE

Yeah. A break. Let's take a break. Komagata Maru is not going anywhere.

SONIA

Not for two months at least.

CHRISTINE

So where are things with Josh?

*Sound of shots being fired O.S.*

CHRISTINE

Oh my God! What was that?

LEONA

Sounded like gun-shots

**CHRISTINE**

Gun-shots?

**SONIA**

Just shut up and stay where you are.

*More gun-shots.*

*Blackout.*

*Sound of news opening credit music.*

**NEWSCASTER**

(V.O.)

In yet another incident of gang related violence, an Abbotsford man was shot dead outside the busy Seven Oaks Mall. The victim, who has been identified as Gurinder Singh, a twenty five year old Indo-Canadian man from Abbotsford was known to the police. The police believe it to be a targeted attack and fear that retaliatory shootings might happen in future.

(END OF SCENE)

*Lights on Sonia's house.*

*Harjit and Sonia are sitting. Harjit switches the T.V. off with the remote.*

**HARJIT:**

Another one of our boys gone.

**SONIA**

Our boys?

**HARJIT**

Didn't you hear? Indo-Canadian boy killed in gang violence! I don't know what's wrong with our community. Someone should do something about it.

**SONIA**

About what?

**HARJIT**

About the involvement of Indo-Canadian boys in gang violence.

**SONIA**

Why only Indo-Canadian boys dad? Why not the White boys? Or Black boys? Or First Nation boys?

**HARJIT**

What are you? A communist now?

**SONIA**

I am not a communist. I am just surprised at the emphasis you are giving on the fact that he was an (making quotation marks in the air) Indo-Canadian. Wouldn't it have bothered you if he was of some other skin color?

**HARJIT**

It would have.

**SONIA**

But not as much?

**HARJIT**

Obviously it affects more when it's one of our own. After all we are Indo-Canadians.

SONIA

I am not.

HARJIT

What?

SONIA

I am not Indo-Canadian.

HARJIT

Really? Then who are you?

SONIA

I am a Canadian. Period.

HARJIT

What are you talking about? Are you denying your identity?

SONIA

On the contrary dad, I am asserting my identity. I am a Canadian whose grand-parents came from India. That's it. But I am Canadian.

HARJIT

With this brown skin of yours? You are living in a fool's paradise.

SONIA

Yes, with this brown skin, I am Canadian. No hyphen in my identity, dad.

HARJIT

Go out there and see if anyone buys that. And what is the expression you use...yes... FYI your great-grand father was the first in our family to come

to Canada, not your grandparents.

**SONIA**

But you never told me that.

**HARJIT**

I didn't know this either. It was Gurbaksh uncle, you know your grandfather's friend? He told this to me today at the Gurdwara. I was talking to him about Komagata Maru and he said that your great-grand father was here in Abbotsford when Komagata Maru came to Canada.

**SONIA**

How exciting? Did he say something more about him? OMG! Who knows, he might have been a part of the Shore Committee that was formed by the Indians to help the passengers. Dad, do you have his picture. If I could add a personal angle to this story, I'll surely get an "A". Do you have his picture?

**HARJIT**

I don't have anything except his name.

**SONIA**

But there must be some record.

**HARJIT**

Maybe in the historical Gurdwara on South Fraser way. You should check it out.

**SONIA**

I sure will dad. Oh! this is so exciting. Wait till I tell Leona and Christine about it.

(END OF SCENE)

*Lights on cookhouse*

*Ali is sitting on a bench writing something*

*Enter Bakshu*

**BAKSHU**

Thank god everyone is away. I tell you there is no privacy here.

**ALI**

That's because there are no women here. What do you need privacy for?  
Are you turning into a Gora?

**BAKSHU**

I need to talk to you privately.

**ALI**

Privately? Are you turning into a revolutionary?

**BAKSHU**

Oh Nahi yaar! I want you to write a letter for me.

**ALI**

To whom?

**BAKSHU**

To my wife?

**ALI**

To your wife? Why?

**BAKSHU**

Why does one write a letter to one's wife?

**ALI**

I mean...why do you want me to write it? You know how to write.

**BAKSHU**

But I want you to write it in English.

**ALI**

In English?

**BAKSHU**

Yes.

**ALI**

Can your wife read English?

**BAKSHU**

No.

**ALI**

Then what's the fun of writing a letter that she can't read.

**BAKSHU**

She can't read Urdu or Punjabi either. She never went to school.

**ALI**

But at least someone from the village can read it to her.

**BAKSHU**

That's what I don't want. I don't want anyone to read what I write to her.

**ALI**



She won't know either.

**BAKSHU**

But she'll understand.

**ALI**

Understand what?

**BAKSHU**

She'll understand that I'm doing well. She'll understand that I love her and she'll understand that I won't let anyone, or anything, even the seven seas come between her and me.

**ALI**

But I'll know what you have written.

**BAKSHU**

You are different. She doesn't know you. The image that she'll see when she gets the letter will be mine and I don't want any stupid letter reader to interfere and distort that image.

**ALI**

I see. OK. I'll write it.

**BAKSHU**

One more thing.

**ALI**

What?

**BAKSHU**

I want you to write it in verse.

**ALI**

In verse?

**BAKSHU**

Yeah, like a poem.

**ALI**

I'm not a poet. I'm just a letter writer

**BAKSHU**

So what?

**ALI**

So, I can't write poetry, especially in English.

**BAKSHU**

It's just like Urdu poetry.

**ALI**

How do you know?

**BAKSHU**

Poetry is about emotions, right?

**ALI**

Right.

**BAKSHU**

Are the English emotions different from the Indian ones? Does a white man love his wife any less or any more than I love my Zubaida?

**ALI**

OK..what do you want to say to her.

**BAKSHU**

Tell her..tell her

*Enter Ram Singh.*

**RAM**

Where is everybody? Where is Harnam? (calls out) Oye, Harnam, Oye Santa Singh.

**BAKSHU**

What's the matter Ram Singh ji. Is everything all right?

**RAM**

Everything is all right. I have got terrific news. I want to share it with everyone.

**ALI**

Why don't you share it with us first?

**RAM**

No. I want to tell it to everyone. (Enter Harnam, Ganda and Santa)  
There they are.

**HARNAM**

What's the matter Ram Singh ji?

**RAM**

Mewa Singh has sent a message from Vancouver. The Komagata Maru is about to enter the Canadian waters. Harnam Singh, your sister will be here with us in less than a week. And so will Santa Singh's brother, Ali's cousin and Meet Singh, your brother-in-law and uncle. They'll all be here in less

than a week.

### SANTA

This calls for a celebration. What do you say Ganda Singh?

### GANDA

It sure does. I'll get the bottle. What do you say Bakshu?

### BAKSHU

(Brings the dhol)

I say Balle balle balle

*All of them do Bhangra.*

*The light slowly fades. A spot downstage on Harnam.*

### HARNAM

One more week. Actually less than a week and my sister will be here with me.

*Enter Simran Downstage on the other end of the stage.*

### SIMRAN

One more week and I will there.

It's been so many days,

So many weeks since we set sail

From that land to that

That land beyond the waves

The land they say is the land

Of milk and honey

Of gold and rubies

And joys aplenty  
There lives my brother.

### HARNAM

I will meet my nephew. Oh he's so cute and so naughty. I should remember to buy some candy.

### SIMRAN

There lives my brother  
Who took care of me  
When my husband died  
Fighting for the British  
A war he didn't know much about  
But he fought, for he was promised  
A life of honour and dignity  
Wherever he went, in this land or that  
And he went to that land  
That land beyond the waves  
Never to return; leaving me  
A widow with a child  
In an unkind world

### HARNAM

My nephew Tej, he's sure to ask me for some candy when he comes. I should also buy some new clothes for him, good warm clothes. Don't want him to catch cold or fever here. I should get some clothes for my sister too.

### SIMRAN

And then my brother  
Went to that land  
And I have been waiting  
To join him there

And now the time has come  
When we will be together  
I will find a bride for him  
He'll look so handsome as a groom  
And we'll sing the songs  
Of joy, and tell jokes  
And talk about that land  
That land we left behind.  
The bow and the stern  
fight the waves day and night,  
And they come back with vengeance  
Crashing and splashing  
Fighting a battle they lose  
Yet they stop not the effort  
Striving hard to keep me away  
From you, you who wait for me  
In that land beyond the waves.

### HARNAM

And I should buy some nuts. Lots of nuts. Almonds, Walnuts and Pistachio. They keep one warm. But first I should go to the Gurdwara to thank Waheguru for his Mehar. Yes. That's the first thing I should do. I should go to the Gurdwara.

*Sound of Waves splashing*

(END OF ACT I)

## ACT II

*The set remains the same except that instead of the cookhouse R there is now visible the façade of the historic Sikh temple at Abbotsford. Lights Downstage and L. The whole of Downstage is a beach from where people can see the Komagata Maru marooned in the sea (The effect sought is that when they look towards the ship, they are looking towards the audience). FRANCES, MARTHA, PETER, LAURIE, TED and DAVE are sitting around the coffee table that now serves as a beach picnic table with an umbrella stuck in the middle of it.*

### LAURIE

Hasn't this been a gorgeous spell of weather this summer?

### MARTHA

Absolutely. Almost seven weeks now without a drop of rain. I don't remember when was the last time I saw a cloud in the sky. It's been Sun, Sun, glorious Sun.

### PETER

And still it took you ladies more than a month to plan this picnic.

### FRANCES

You know how hard it is nowadays to plan an excursion with everyone having different schedules.

### DAVE

Maybe someday they will invent machines to help people manage their

schedules and arrange for meetings. That'll make things easier.

**LAURIE**

Well, machines or no machines. We are here at the beach on this glorious day. And the ship is still there although I must say I am bit disappointed. It's not as big as I thought.

**MARTHA**

Me too. I mean, for a thousand people, I was hoping to see a bigger vessel.

**TED**

Oh you're mistaken. There aren't a thousand Hindus out there. They are about three hundred and seventy something passengers and twenty odd Japanese crew members.

**MARTHA**

Well, that's a drag. A thousand would've been more fun to watch. Dave, did you bring the binoculars?

**DAVE**

Of course I did. Here (hands Martha the binoculars).

**MARTHA**

(looks through the binoculars)

Boy O Boy! Just look at them. Turbans and beards, turbans and beards.... lining the deck. Here Dave, have a look

**DAVE:**

(takes the binoculars)

A thousand or three hundred, those are a lot of Hindus. I wouldn't want them here in Canada.



**PETER**

Lemme see.(takes the binoculars). That is a big lot. I say they should let the healthy ones in. I can use a few more at my mill.

**TED**

You should set up a mill in India. There you'll find plenty of them...two dozen to a dime.

**PETER**

That's not a bad idea. A mill in India, another one in China, that'll be good for cheap labour.

**MARTHA**

And keep Canada pure for the white people.

**PETER**

I am sure Frances will like that too. I hear out there it's sunny most of the time and it rarely rains.

**FRANCES**

Oh please! Nobody is going to India or China or wherever. May I have those binoculars for a moment please?(As Frances looks through the binoculars, a group of men with guns in their hands march past the stage singing "White Canada Forever" A couple of youth enter and start playing catch UC) Peter, Martha, Did you see what I am seeing?

**TED**

What? One of their 33 million gods?

**MARTHA**

My god! They have more gods than people and I certainly don't want their gods or their people here. (Hums White Canada Forever)

**FRANCES**

No. I see a child and a woman, probably his mother. I think she might be....

**PETER**

She might be who?

**FRANCES**

Oh! Nothing. How would I know?

**MARTHA**

Are you all right dear?

**FRANCES**

I am all right. I think I should go for a walk.

**PETER**

I'll come with you.

**FRANCES**

You don't have to Peter. I'll just take a stroll and be back. Why don't you start playing poker? I believe it works better with five players.

*Exit Frances R. Enter a RICHARD L*

**RICHARD**

(Approaching the picnic party)

Good afternoon folks! Hope you are enjoying a wonderful day at the beach? My name is Richard and I am reporter with the Independent. Would you folks mind if I asked you a few questions?

**MARTHA**

About what?

**RICHARD**

I am doing a story on the public response to the coming of Hindus on board that ship Komagata Maru. Sort of trying to gauge the public mood and sentiment. Do you support the government decision to deny entry to the passengers of the ship?

**MARTHA**

I fully support this. We already have more than our share of Hindus here in Canada. I think the government is absolutely right in denying them entry.

**RICHARD**

(to Peter)

And what about you, sir? Do you share the lady's views?

**PETER**

Not completely. I have some Hindus working in my mill and they are very good workers and God knows we need a lot more labour force in this country than we currently have. And as I look at that ship, I see good working hands that can be used to build this country. I say they should let the healthy ones in and send the others back.

**RICHARD**

There are reports that there are a few women on board too. Do you think that the Hindus be allowed to bring their families here?

**MARTHA**

Absolutely not. What do you say Dave?

**DAVE**

I think there is no reason that they be allowed to bring their families here. We don't want them settling here permanently, do we?

**TED**

But you don't want them to sleep around with white women either, do you?

**LAURIE**

Oh Ted. Stop being horrible.

**TED**

But that's bound to happen one day or the other if we don't allow them to bring in their women. I think I read somewhere about this white woman who married a Hindu (to Reporter) you might know something about it sir.

**RICHARD**

You are correct sir. Unfortunately I reported that story. There is this guy call Gayan Singh who somehow managed to make Annie Wright agree to marry him. She later converted to his faith, even got a Hindu name, some Labb Kaur or something, dreadful story.

**MARTHA**

He might have used some black magic to hypnotise her. Otherwise what Canadian woman in her right frame of mind would do such a thing? That's why I say, stop this infection before it spreads any further.

**RICHARD**

Thank you madam, thanks to all of you folks. You have been very helpful. Don't forget to read the Independent tomorrow.

*Exit Richard*

**TED**

What about the game of Poker? Are we playing or not?

**LAURIE**

How about some food first?

**DAVE**

Sounds good.

**TED**

Shouldn't we wait for Frances.

**PETER**

She won't mind. There is plenty of food. And I am hungry.

**DAVE**

So am I.

*Laurie and Martha start laying the table. Lights dim on the table.*

*Two Aboriginal men, carrying Salmon enter R. They look towards the ship.*

**ABORIGINAL MAN 1**

What's the deal with that ship? It's been there for almost two months now.

**ABORIGINAL MAN 2**

It's a Japanese ship. The government is not allowing it to enter Canada.

**ABORIGINAL MAN 1**

Why?

**ABORIGINAL MAN 2**

Because it is carrying Indians.

**ABORIGINAL MAN 1**

Indians? You mean our people?

**ABORIGINAL MAN 2**

No. The other Indians. The real Indians, from India.

**ABORIGINAL MAN 1**

Oh..OK.. the people who wear turbans. Right? And look like us?

**ABORIGINAL MAN 2**

Yes.

**ABORIGINAL MAN 1**

But why doesn't the government let them in to Canada?

**ABORIGINAL MAN 2**

They say they only want white people to come to Canada.

**ABORIGINAL MAN 1**

So they have stopped the ship?

**ABORIGINAL MAN 2:**

Yes, that's why they have stopped the ship.

**ABORIGINAL MAN 1**

I wish we had done the same.

**ABORIGINAL MAN 2**

Too late for that now. Let's go home before this fish goes bad.

*(Exit Aboriginal men)*

*Enter Harnam UL. He crosses the youth who were earlier playing catch, but are now sitting on the beach, playing some board game. Harnam reaches DC. Dim lights on the picnic table and the youth playing the board game.*

## HARNAM

(looking towards the ship)

It's been forty days. My sister and nephew are there, right there, in front of me. But I can't meet them, I can't play with my nephew, I can't hug my sister, although they are right there, there, in front of me. O Waheguru! What kind of a trial is this? I am so close to them and yet so far. I can't even send the candy and nuts that I bought for them. I wonder if they are getting enough food, or water. It hasn't rained in a month. Why hasn't it rained? It's always raining here, but now when they need water, no rain, nothing. It's my flesh and blood out there on the ship and I can't do nothing, nothing, nothing. If I could, I would swim to the ship and meet my sister, but that tug boat, Sea-Lion will stop me. Maybe I can do this at night, when they can't see me. I think that's a good idea. I'll try to swim to Komagata Maru at night.

*Enter Simran under a spotlight*

## SIMRAN

If only I could swim across the ocean to meet Harnam. He must be so worried. It doesn't seem very far. I can certainly swim the distance. It's been forty days since we came here. Forty long days and forty dark nights (looks at a medal in her hand), this medal they gave him, my husband; they said he fought well, he saved the life of his British Sergeant. They will certainly honour this medal. I should continue to pray and not lose hope.

**HARNAM**

Maybe I should get a boat, a small boat, so small that it could not be detected during night. That seems like a better idea. That way the provisions I want to take to them will remain dry. It's time for action, otherwise there is no hope.

**SIMRAN**

(talking to someone off stage)

What did you say? They have agreed to allow those passengers to land who have been to Canada earlier. Ah! Finally some good news! They are leaving tomorrow ! Waheguru! At last a ray of hope.

*Exit Simran*

*Enter Frances*

**FRANCES**

Harnam? Is that you? What a pleasant surprise!

**HARNAM**

Hello Madam Frances. How are you?

**FRANCES**

I'm very well. Thank you. What brings you to Vancouver?

**HARNAM**

I came to have a look at Komagata Maru.

**FRANCES**

Oh yes! You told me. Your sister on board. Right?

**HARNAM**



Yes madam. And I am very worried about her, and especially my young nephew. I have heard that there is severe food and water shortage on the ship and the government is not allowing anybody to go near it.

**FRANCES**

I am so sorry to hear that. But I have some good news for you. I read in the papers today that the courts have accepted the petition of one of the passengers on board Komagata Maru and they are going to use this as a test case. If the court allows him to stay in Canada then other passengers will also be admitted.

**HARNAM**

That is really a good news madam. I haven't read the paper today but I am sure people at the Gurdwara will be very happy.

**FRANCES**

I am sure they will be. So keep faith in God and hope for the best.

**HARNAM**

That's all we can do. Have faith in God and hope for the best. There is nothing else to be done.

**FRANCES**

Maybe there is. My brother Henry, he works for the government. I'll talk to him. Maybe he'll be able to help your sister.

**HARNAM**

Oh Thank you Madam Frances. You are very kind.

**FRANCES**

I don't promise anything. But as you said, let's hope for the best.

**HARNAM**

You are right madam.

**FRANCES**

Well, I should go now. Peter must be wondering where'd I wandered off ?  
You take care of yourself.

**HARNAM**

You too madam. Bye.

*(Frances goes towards the picnic table. The light  
fades on Harnam who exits UL)*

**MARTHA**

*(seeing Frances)*

Here comes our solitary reaper.

**PETER**

Where have you been?

**FRANCES**

Just went for a walk along the beach.

**LAURIE**

While you were walking, Peter was losing in Poker. He is poorer by a few bucks since you left him

**FRANCES**

I won't worry a lot about that. He'll make a lot of money when he starts that mill in India. Right dear?

(END OF SCENE)

*The Lights go up. We see the façade of the Sikh Temple in Abbotsford.*

*Sonia, Christine and Leona come out of the temple.*

**CHRISTINE**

Well..that was a bummer.

**LEONA**

Yeah, I can't believe you can't read Punjabi Sonia?

**CHRISTINE**

Exactly, why can't you read Punjabi?

**SONIA**

I don't know (to Leona), I guess the same way you can't read Polish or (to Christine) or you can't read Spanish or German or wherever your folks came from. I mean who needs Punjabi, right?

**LEONA**

We need it now. There is like a ton of information in those documents in there, but all in Punjabi, and the guy at the Temple is no good with English.

**CHRISTINE**

We need a (thinking hard) you know, what's the word?

**SONIA**

A what?

**CHRISTINE**

You know a guy who can read Punjabi and.....

**LEONA**

Translate for us in English.

**SONIA**

You mean a translator?

**CHRISTINE**

Yes Exactly. A translator is what we need.

**SONIA**

But where are we gonna get a translator?

**LEONA**

How about Inder?

**SONIA**

He can barely speak Punjabi. He can't read.

**CHRISTINE**

There must be somebody.

**SONIA**

There must be plenty of people who can do this. But who's got the time?  
Everybody is so busy.

**LEONA**

I am gonna learn Punjabi.

**SONIA**

Our presentation is due next week. I don't think you can learn enough by  
then to translate the documents.

LEONA

Not for the presentation. I am gonna learn just for the sake of knowing the language.

CHRISTINE

Me too. Then I can watch Bollywood movies without having to read the sub-titles.

SONIA

Bollywood movies are in Hindi.

CHRISTINE

OK..then I'll learn that. Any Idea when is the next Shahrukh Khan movie coming out?

LEONA

OK..guys, no Hollywood, no Bollywood. We have a situation to deal with. I mean look at those documents, there is an important part of Canadian history there waiting to be discovered. You gotta do something Sonia. Find someone who can help us out.

SONIA

I think I know someone who can.

LEONA

Who?

SONIA

There is this relative of mine. I'll ask.

CHRISTINE

Don't just ask. Plead.

**LEONA**

Plead? Wow. You got the right word first time. Nice improvement

**CHRISTINE**

Oh Shut up.

**SONIA**

Hey guys I'm starving. Where do you wanna eat?

**LEONA**

Wherever you say.

**CHRISTINE**

Guys we are standing in front of a Sikh temple, let's go have Langar.

**SONIA**

Langar? Christine, I'm impressed.

**LEONA**

Sounds good. Let's go.

**CHRISTINE**

I hope they have that awesome Langar Daal.

**LEONA**

And the Chickpeas. Chana masala.

**SONIA**

OK, we are going to the Temple now. Can we think of God for a moment?

**CHRISTINE**

Yeah sure. God. Please find us a translator.

*They go back inside.*

*Enter Ram Singh, Ali, Bakshu and JAGROOP.*

*Bakshu is carrying a dhol (drum) and Jagroop has a garland of flowers around his neck.*

*Bakshu beats the dhol; Harnam, Ganda Singh, and Santa Singh come out from the Sikh Temple. They seem quite happy.*

**RAM SINGH:**

(Signals Bakshu to stop playing the dhol)

Brothers, I on behalf of all of Indians in Abbotsford, welcome Jagroop Singh back to Canada. Jagroop is one of the twenty two passengers of Komagata Maru who have been permitted to land since they have been to Canada on earlier occasion. This is a small but important victory for us and with the grace of God almighty, we will soon be able to meet all our brothers and sisters who are stranded on Komagata Maru.

**ALI**

Ram Singh is right. We are trying to communicate with Ottawa and are hopeful that we will get a good response from there. Mr. Edward Bird is also hopeful that court will ultimately decide in our favour.

**SANTA SINGH**

This calls for celebration. Bakshu, let's prepare a special feast for Jagroop. What do you say?

**BAKSHU**

Excellent idea. But we can't have a real feast here at the Temple, (to Santa) you know what I mean. Why don't we have one at the cook house? Give me a couple of hours, and everything will be arranged.

**GANDA SINGH**

Good idea. Oye Santeya, Let's go and help Bakshu make the arrangements. Jagroop can freshen up in the meantime.

**SANTA**

You are right (makes a gesture referring to alcohol), we need to make the arrangements. (to the rest of the party) You meet us at the cook house in a couple of hours.

*Exit Santa, and Bakshu*

**RAM SINGH**

Ali, Ganda, I want to discuss something important with you. Let's go to the office. Harnam, you take Jagroop to my house. I have made all arrangements for him. And we'll meet all of you at the cook house at six.

*Exit Ram, Ali, and Ganda*

**HARNAM**

Let's go Jagroop.

**JAGROOP**

Wait a minute. You are Harnam Singh from the village Sarhali near Amritsar, right?

**HARNAM**

Yes. Did Ram Singh mention this?

**JAGROOP**

Harsimran told me about you. Your sister.

**HARNAM**

My sister. Harsimran. She told you. You met her. Of course, you met her.



How's she? And how's my nephew Tej.

*Jagroop remains silent*

**HARNAM**

Why don't you say something? Is everything alright? Please say something.

**JAGROOP**

They are alright. Like everybody else on the ship. Hungry, starved, thirsty, but alive. Conditions are not good. You know one day (checks himself).

**HARNAM**

What? What happened? Why did you stop? Please tell me.

**JAGROOP**

One day, your nephew Tej, he became unconscious.

*Enter Simran under a spotlight*

**SIMRAN**

(overlapping Jagroop's lines)

One day, your nephew Tej, he became unconscious.

**HARNAM**

Unconscious?

**SIMRAN**

He was thirsty, very thirsty, but there was no water. And he fell down. I called for help and they all rushed where Tej lay, muttering something. Brother Jagroop couldn't see his condition and went to the captain of the ship and asked him to give me some water but he refused.

**HARNAM**

How could he?

**SIMRAN**

It's a jungle out here. The Japanese crew don't care about us. They are allowed to go to the city to buy food but there is nothing for us.

**HARNAM**

Then what happened?

**SIMRAN**

Jagroop pa ji couldn't tolerate it anymore so he pushed the captain aside and raided his cabinet. Unfortunately, there was no water there either.

**HARNAM**

Waheguru.

**SIMRAN**

But he had beer. Jagroop took a bottle of beer and put some beer in Tej's mouth. After some time Tej regained consciousness.

**HARNAM**

Was Tej alright after that?

**SIMRAN**

Oh he was uncontrollable. He made me run all over the deck trying to catch him. He's become very smart you know too. Talks about you a lot.

*Exit Simran*

**JAGROOP**

(overlapping Simran's lines)

Talks about you a lot. We became good friends. He told me that you used to play what is name of the game...

**HARNAM**

Lukan—meeti. Hide and seek?

**JAGROOP**

Yes, Lukan—meeti with him. I played that game with him a couple of times. I tell you what, that kid has become the darling of everybody on board. His innocent smile and kid-talk is like a ray of sunshine in those dark and gloomy waters. And your sister, she is so full of hope. She is always cheering everybody up, and praying to god for this ordeal to be over.

**HARNAM**

It's so good to hear that they are well. I was so worried. Let's go. You must be very tired.

**JAGROOP**

Harnam. I have a gift for you.

**HARNAM**

A gift?

**JAGROOP**

Not really a gift. Something much more important than a gift. It's from your sister.

**HARNAM**

From my sister? What is it?

**JAGROOP**

(Takes out a small packet from his bag)

Here. Your sister sent it for you.

**HARNAM**

(opens the packet)

It's a Rakhri. She sent me a Rakhri.

**JAGROOP**

She said.

*Enter Simran under a spotlight*

**SIMRAN**

(overlapping Jagroop's lines)

Harnam, I'd love to tie the Rakhri on your wrist myself, and I will if I am allowed to enter Canada. In case I can't be with you on the auspicious day of Rakhri, then you should tie it on your wrist and remember that I'll always love you and always pray for your well-being and happiness. May Satguru always keep you under his protection.

*Exit Simran*

**HARNAM**

Oh she will be here. It's still two months before Rakhri, and I'll make sure that Harsimran is here before that. She will tie this Rakhri herself on my wrist.

**JAGROOP**

We all hope she does. Let's go.

*Exits Jagroop*

*Harnam looks at the Rakhri for some time and*

*follows Jagroop.*

(END OF SCENE)

*The Light go up on Sonia'and Harjit's house. Harjit is reading the newspaper and having tea.*

*Enter Sonia carrying a backpack full of books.*

**SONIA**

Good Evening Dad.

**HARJIT**

Good Evening. Seems like a heavy day at school.

**SONIA**

End of semester Dad. Everyone is stressed out. Even the teachers are no exception.

**HARJIT**

How's your presentation coming?

**SONIA**

It's developing, (looks at the newspaper). What are you reading? Matrimonials?

**HARJIT:**

Don't worry, I am not reading them for you.

**SONIA**

Then for whom? Inder?

HARJIT

No. Nobody in particular. Just browsing what's available in the market. And in any case most of these are for *those* kind of marriages.

SONIA

Oh! *Those* kind of marriages.

HARJIT

Whatever.

SONIA

(After a beat)

Dad, I wanna learn Punjabi.

HARJIT

Excuse me.

SONIA

I said I wanna learn Punjabi.

HARJIT

But you know Punjabi.

SONIA

I can communicate a li'l bit. But I want to be able to read it and write it.

HARJIT

What's going on here? Ever since you were in elementary school, I have trying to teach you to read and write Punjabi but you never took any interest. And now, all of a sudden you want to learn Punjabi? Is this about a boy?

**SONIA**

No Dad. It's about the presentation.

**HARJIT**

You are making this presentation in Punjabi?

**SONIA**

No Dad. I went to the Gurdwara today to look at some of the archives. And most of them are in Punjabi and none of us could read it. We asked the priest to help us, but he doesn't know a lot of English.

**HARJIT**

So you plan to read it yourself. Isn't your presentation due in a couple of weeks?

**SONIA**

Yes. It is

**HARJIT**

And you plan to learn to read and then decipher those texts within a couple of weeks.

**SONIA**

I know it's tough.

**HARJIT**

It's impossible.

**SONIA**

But we need that information. It's vital to our presentation.

**HARJIT**

Why don't ask someone who knows Punjabi to help you.

**SONIA**

Do you think I should?

**HARJIT**

Why not?

**SONIA**

Do you know somebody who can do this for us?

**HARJIT**

Hmmm, Satnam can do this.

**SONIA**

But Satnam uncle is in India right now.

**HARJIT**

Oh yeah, Satnam is in India. Well, I can't think of anyone right now. But I'm sure you'll find somebody.

**SONIA**

I know someone who could do this.

**HARJIT**

Who?

**SONIA**

You.

**HARJIT**

Me?



SONIA

Yes. You know Punjabi. You could translate the documents for us.

HARJIT

Oh no! Not me.

SONIA

Why not? You are my father. You should help me with my studies.

HARJIT

How am I gonna find time for that?

SONIA

Please Dad. This will ensure an A grade.

HARJIT

An A grade? Are you sure?

SONIA

Positive Dad. And if I could find anything related to my great grandfather, it might be an A+.

HARJIT

An A+?

SONIA

Yes Dad.

HARJIT

But you will learn Punjabi nevertheless.

**SONIA**

Leona and Christine also want to learn.

**HARJIT**

Really? Alright then. When do you want me to start?

**SONIA**

Asap.

**HARJIT**

No texting language in this house please.

(END OF SCENE)

*The Lights go up on the pantry/storage room of Frances' house.*

*Enter Frances and Harnam. Harnam is carrying a sack of firewood.*

**FRANCES**

You can place it at its usual spot Harnam. Thanks. And here (pays him the money).

**HARNAM**

Thank you Madam Frances (moves to exit but hesitates).

**FRANCES**

Is something the matter Harnam?

**HARNAM**

I was thinking...

**FRANCES**

Go on.

**HARNAM**

You know my sister. She is still on the Komagata Maru.

**FRANCES**

Is she? Have you heard something from her?

**HARNAM**

Some passengers who had been to Canada earlier were allowed to land and one of them came here to Abbotsford. He told me some horrible things.

**FRANCES**

Oh No! Is your sister alright?

**HARNAM**

She is fine. But one day my nephew fainted due to thirst and hunger. The food and water situation on the ship is very bad. (A beat) Did you get a chance to talk to your brother? You said he might be able to help.

**FRANCES**

I haven't had a chance to do so. Henry was in Ottawa. He just came to Vancouver a couple of days ago. I'll talk to him about this. I'm sure he'll do something.

**HARNAM**

I hope so. Although, there is another ray of hope.

**PETER**

(O.S.)

Frances, is the tea ready?

**FRANCES**

Just coming dear.

**HARNAM**

You know the passenger you told me about, Munshi Singh, the courts are going to hear his petition tomorrow

**PETER**

(O.S.)

Frances.

**FRANCES**

Coming dear.

**HARNAM**

And our lawyer, Mr. Bird, he says that he will surely win the case.

**FRANCES**

I am sure he will. Now I think I should go. Peter is getting anxious.

**HARNAM**

I am sorry. I did not want to interfere.

**FRANCES**

That's all right. You take care.

**HARNAM**

Bye Madam.

*Exit Harnam*

*Frances comes to the Dining Table. Enter Peter.*

**PETER**

What took you so long?

**FRANCES**

It was the firewood man.

**PETER**

You do seem to have a fondness for that Hindu.

**FRANCES**

Poor man. He is so worried about his sister. She is aboard that ship Komagata Maru. He was saying something about the case being in court. I told him I'd talk to Henry. He should be able to help her.

**PETER:**

(reading the newspaper)

I don't see any possibility of that happening.

**FRANCES**

What do you mean?

**PETER**

Here...Mr. Stevens, the Member of Parliament has given a rather interesting statement. Listen to this. "What we face in British Columbia and Canada is this—whether or not the civilization which finds its highest exemplification in the Anglo-Saxon British rule shall or shall not prevail in the Dominion of Canada. We have on the bench of British Columbia today, men who are willing to give a decision contrary to the general public opinion and contrary to what is the clear meaning of the Immigration Act. Some people say why don't you go to courts with your case? We are prepared to go to courts if we can get a fair court to go to."

**FRANCES**

What does that mean?

**PETER**

To me it seems that the government doesn't even trust the courts on this matter. I don't see any hope for these people now.

**FRANCES**

I don't see any reason to talk to Henry after this.

**PETER**

Oh yeah. No good can come out of it.

**FRANCES**

You are right.

(END OF SCENE)

*The Lights go up on Sikh Temple.*

*Enter Ram Singh and Ali*

**RAM SINGH**

(Reading the Newspaper)

The judges of the court of appeal have unanimously decided that Munshi Singh could not be admitted to Canada, for a variety of reasons. The continuous journey regulation has been violated and he will be an unskilled labourer in Canada. (Pause) So there goes our last hope Ali.

**ALI**

(takes the newspaper)

I don't believe it. Look at what one of the judges has said. "Better that peoples of non-assimilative—and by nature properly non-assimilative—race should not come to Canada, but rather they should remain of residence in their country of origin and there do their share, as they have in the past in the preservation and development of the Empire." Non assimilative... what on earth does he mean by that?

**RAM SINGH**

That the white people are more suited to this climate than we brown people are.

(END OF SCENE)

*The Light go up on Frances' house  
Frances is pouring tea for Peter.  
She sneezes.*

**PETER**

God bless you.

**FRANCES**

Thanks (sneezes again).

**PETER**

Allergies again? What is it this time?

**FRANCES**

You name it. I got it? I don't think I'll ever assimilate in this climate. Rain, Rain, Rain and if it's not raining water then it's raining pollen.

**PETER**

What did Dr. Mackenzie say?

**FRANCES**

What will he say? He hasn't figured out his wife's allergies so far.

**PETER**

(reading the newspaper)

Bad news for your Hindu friend.

**FRANCES**

What happened?

**PETER**

The government tried to use force to make the ship leave Canadian waters. They sent a tug boat called Sea Lion with one hundred and fifty policemen but the passengers attacked the Sea Lion using coal as missiles. Many policemen were injured.

**FRANCES**

That's awful.

**PETER**

That's nothing. Tomorrow they are going to employ HCMS Rainbow. And trust me you can't face the Rainbow with coal. The Komagata Maru story is over. Tomorrow the ship will be forced out of Canadian waters.

**FRANCES**

(sneezes)

Poor Harnam. He'll be heart-broken. (She takes out the packet of herbs that Harnam had given her and puts them in the Kettle)

**PETER**

I have a feeling, it's going to be ugly. (A beat) What's that smell?



**FRANCES**

It's from those herbs that Harnam gave me. I think I am going to try them.

**PETER**

Are you serious? I thought you said you threw them away.

**FRANCES**

Well I didn't and I am willing to try anything to make these allergies go away. Otherwise we are moving back to England.

(END OF SCENE)

*The Lights go up the Sikh Temple. Sonia, Leona, Christine and Harjit are standing in front of the temple.*

**HARJIT**

I still can't believe you tricked me into doing this.

**SONIA**

Dad you are the best.

**HARJIT**

Enough with the buttering. I am doing this, OK. And actually to be honest, I am sort of excited about this. Who knows I might find the record of my grandfather in there. By the way, is there some specific aspect that you girls want me to focus on?

**SONIA**

Dad, we have explored so many aspects that it is quite difficult to pinpoint on a specific one.

**LEONA**

So far, we have learned a lot about the time Komagata Maru spent in Canadian waters and the condition under which it was forced to go back.

**CHRISTINE**

And also how the British government massacred the passengers when the ship went back to India.

**SONIA**

For me the most exciting part has been the way the local community organized itself to help the people on board the ship.

**LEONA**

But what did they do after the ship went back?

**SONIA**

What do you mean?

**LEONA**

Komagata Maru organized the Indo-Canadian community in a way that had never happened before.

**HARJIT**

I think you are right.

**LEONA**

So what happened here, after the ship left for India? Was there any retaliation? What happened to the key players like Hopkinson, M.P. Stevens and Malcolm Reid?

**CHRISTINE**

Why didn't I think of that? After all there must have been relatives of those who suffered and died on Komagata Maru. Do you think someone would have hit back?

**SONIA**

You mean revenge?

**CHRISTINE**

Yes. Revenge. Did someone seek revenge for those atrocities?

**HARJIT**

Good point Christine. I have a vague recollection of reading somewhere that there was some violence in Vancouver after the return of Komagata Maru. I am sure I will get some information about those events from the document in the Gurdwara.

**SONIA**

Revenge! That sounds exciting.

**LEONA**

Talking about excitement, check out Sonia's FB page?

**SONIA**

Leona, not in front of Dad.

**HARJIT**

I think I should go inside now. Got a lot of reading to do (Goes inside the temple).

**CHRISTINE**

Thanks a lot for doing this Mr. Singh.

**CHRISTINE**

OK, what if we find something really exciting about this revenge angle?

**LEONA**

What do you mean?

**CHRISTINE**

I mean that we have studied so many aspects of this event, and all of them are equally important, and now if we find that the revenge aspect is also very exciting, then what aspect are we gonna focus on for our presentation?

**SONIA**

She is right. Prof. Simth has set a time limit of fifteen minutes. If we go beyond that, we risk getting a "B".

**CHRISTINE**

Oh please. Not with the "A" grade again.

**SONIA**

Don't underestimate the power of the "A". That's what helped me rope in my Dad.

**CHRISTINE**

Oh! So the problem is a genetic one.

**SONIA**

Shut up Christine.

(END OF SCENE)

*The Lights go up on Frances' house. Peter is reading*

*a book. Frances is knitting.*

**PETER**

This book here says that allergies are genetic in their origin. They don't have a lot to do the climate.

**FRANCES**

Are you saying that I underwent a genetic transformation when I came to Canada? My genes are the same Peter. The climate has changed and I thought my body was not suited for this climate until....

**PETER**

Until what?

**FRANCES**

Until I tried the herbs that Harnam gave me.

**PETER**

You mean to say that that Hindu's herbs worked.

**FRANCES**

Have you heard me sneeze today?

**PETER**

I don't think so.

**FRANCES**

And yesterday?

**PETER**

I don't remember.

**FRANCES**

I haven't had a bout of sneezing for almost a week now. And this has never happened before. His herbs are magical.

**PETER**

That is amazing.

**FRANCES**

My sinuses are clear. Everything smells so fresh.

**PETER**

You know what I smell?

**FRANCES**

What?

**PETER**

I smell a business opportunity. Why don't I import these herbs from India and sell them here. I could make a killing. Do you think your Hindu friend will give me the formula?

**FRANCES**

Did you say Hindu friend?

**PETER**

We are all God's children, aren't we?

**FRANCES**

If you had not objected to me trying it out earlier, you might have gone to India on Komagata Maru. Too bad the ship's already left.

**HARNAM**

(O.S.)

Firewood man.

**PETER**

Here he is. Let me open the door (exits to open the door).

**FRANCES**

Peter?

*Enter Peter with Harnam*

**PETER**

You can come this way. The other door is again giving me some trouble. You know what? I'll take this from you and take it inside (takes the sack of wood from Harnam).

**HARNAM**

But Sir. This is my duty.

**PETER**

It's alright? I can use some exercise. You sit down. I am sure Frances would like to have a chat with you.

*Exit Peter.*

**FRANCES**

Your herbs worked wonders. I have been feeling so much better over the last few days.

**HARNAM**

I am happy that I was able to help.

**FRANCES**

I wish I could say the same. I am sorry I couldn't do much to help your sister.

**HARNAM**

You should not say that madam. It's not your fault.

**FRANCES**

But I do feel bad about what has happened. I hope you believe me.

**HARNAM**

I believe you madam. I know who is to blame for this. And I wish I could do something about it.

**FRANCES**

Now Harnam, you shouldn't let the emotions get the better of you. You should relax. This is not the end of the world. You will meet your sister someday, when you go visit India. Or who knows the government might change the laws in future.

**HARNAM**

I am sure I will meet her someday. But today I miss her so much. Madam Frances, Can I ask you a favour?

**FRANCES**

What is it Harnam?

**HARNAM**

(Takes out the Rakhri from his pocket)

Would you tie this on my wrist?

**FRANCES**

What is this?



**HARNAM**

This is Rakhri. Every year on the full moon night in August, sisters all over India tie this band over the wrist of their brothers. This is a symbol of a sister's love for her brother and a brother's pledge to protect her at all costs, never to make her unhappy.

**FRANCES**

That is so sweet.

**HARNAM**

My sister sent this Rakhri to me. Maybe in her heart she always knew that the government won't let her meet me. But she sent this, so that I can tie this and feel her love for me. Today is the full moon night. Would you be my sister madam Frances and tie this on my wrist?

**FRANCES**

(Hesitates)

Oh Harnam....I don't know..

**HARNAM**

If you don't want to do this, it's OK (moves towards the door).

**FRANCES**

Harnam wait (goes near him and takes the Rakhri) Will it be the right wrist or the left one?

**HARNAM**

Right one. (Frances is about to tie the Rakhri) Wait. (He picks up a piece of cloth from the table and covers Frances' head). Now tie it. (Frances ties the Rakhri. Harnam touches his eyes with his wrist and then kisses the Rakhri. Then he takes out some money from his pocket) This is for you.

FRANCES

I can't take money from you.

HARNAM

Please don't say no. This is the tradition. Brothers give their sisters gifts on this day. I didn't bring any gift but you should at least accept this from your Indian brother.

FRANCES

(takes the money)

Harnam, you are so sweet. I'll pray for your sister's safe return to India. I hope you meet her soon.

HARNAM

Thank you. I promise that I will never do anything to make you unhappy and if need be, I'll protect you with my life. (Frances is too overwhelmed with emotions to respond.) I should go now.

FRANCES

God be with you Harnam.

*Exit Harnam.*

(END OF SCENE)

*The Lights go up on the Sikh Temple. Harjit comes out the temple. He is carrying a book in his hands. He stands facing the audience. The lights fade on Harjit whereas they go bright on the Temple giving Harjit's figure a silhouetted appearance. A bullet shot is heard, followed by another one and then there*

*is a volley of shots. Harjit covers his ears with his hands. The firing continues. Harjit falls on his knees and then goes into foetal position still covering his ears with his hands. The lights fade on the Temple. The shots can still be heard.*  
*Lights go up on Harjit's house. Sonia, Christine and Leona are sitting at the dining table.*  
*Harjit enters, he looks dazed.*

**SONIA**

Hi Dad!

**CHRISTINE AND LEONA**

Hello Mr. Singh.

**HARJIT**

Hello.

**SONIA**

Dad, are you ok?

**HARJIT**

Can you get me a glass of water?

**SONIA**

Sure Dad. (Sonia goes to the Kitchen counter. Harjit sits in the chair vacated by Sonia. Sonia brings a glass and gives it to Harjit and stands behind him. Harjit gulps down the water in one go) Dad, are you ok?

**HARJIT**

I am alright.

**LEONA**

Sonia, I think we should go.

**HARJIT**

No Leona. Stay. I want to share with you what I found in those papers. It was horrible. The extent of violence that happened in the aftermath of the Komagata Maru incident was simply horrible. First, two informants of Hopkinson were killed. Then Bela Singh, the principal informant of Hopkinson opened fire indiscriminately inside the Gurdwara at Vancouver and killed Bhag Singh and Battan Singh and injured many others. Can you believe it? Sikhs murdered by fellow Sikhs inside the Sikh temple. It was horrible. And then when it seemed that the bloodshed will never stop, Bhai Mewa Singh decided that it was time for Hopkinson to go.

**LEONA**

And what about Reid and Stevens?

**HARJIT**

Malcolm Reid was transferred out of the Immigration Department and from Vancouver. He was in any case, a puppet in the hands of Member of Parliament H.H. Stevens, who lived up to the age of 95.

**SONIA**

Hopkinson was the face of the government.

**CHRISTINE**

And he was half Indian.

**LEONA**

Although he never accepted this. But he knew the Indian languages, could mix up with Indians and had his network of informants within the community so he would be an obvious target. Was Stevens never attacked

Mr. Singh?

**HARJIT**

No. Not even once.

**SONIA**

It's weird. Isn't it? In those violent days, the chief perpetrator of the crime goes scot free.

**LEONA**

He was a lucky bastard. Sorry Mr. Singh.

**SONIA**

Dad, did you find something about your grand-father?

**HARJIT**

Not much. His name was listed as one of the members of the Abbotsford Gurdwara committee, but that's about it. Nothing exciting that you can use for your presentation.

**CHRISTINE**

What was his name?

**HARJIT**

Harnam Singh. His name was Harnam Singh.

(END OF SCENE)

*Lights go up on the Sikh Temple. Harnam comes out of the temple. He is holding a newspaper in his hand. He stands outside the façade. Lights dim. Enter Simran*

## SIMRAN

On September 26, 2014, Komagata Maru reached the coast of British India. The British authorities feared that the ship was carrying seditious material and elements. They searched the ship for three days and when they found nothing of consequence, they ordered the ship to go to the port of Budge Budge, about seventy miles from Calcutta from where we were ordered to board a train to Punjab. We were penniless by now, and tired and hungry and didn't want to go to Punjab. We wanted to stay in Calcutta and find some sort of employment there. We decided to walk to Calcutta in the form a procession carrying the holy Guru Granth Sahib to a Sikh temple in Calcutta. We gathered at Budge Budge Station for prayer and Ardas.

## V.O.

Ek Omkar, satnaam karta purakh.....

*Enter sergeant with three policemen*

## SERGEANT

None of you is going to Calcutta. Do you hear that? Now you get on that train right now, otherwise I might have to use force.

## SIMRAN

Let us at least finish our prayers.

## SERGEANT

To hell with your prayers. On the count of three, if you don't start boarding, you will be shot down. Take positions.

## POLICEMAN 1

Sir, it will be a massacre. These people are like sitting ducks.

**SERGEANT**

Well, then go hunting. One, two.

**SERGEANT**

Fire.

*A volley of bullets is fired.  
Harnam covers his ears with his hands. The firing continues. Harnam falls on his knees covering his ears with his hands. The lights fade on the Temple. The shots can still be heard. The lights come back on. Harnam stands up. He sees the vision of Simran covered in blood. He tears up the paper and lets out a loud scream. Ram Singh and Ali rush out of the temple.*

**RAM SINGH**

What's the matter, Harnam?

**ALI**

What happened?

**HARNAM**

The Komagata Maru Ali, the Komagata Maru. They fired on the passengers in Budge Budge. They just shot. Nobody knows how many died. Nobody knows what happened to the survivors. Harsimran, Tej, I don't know if they are alive or not. And if they are alive, where are they, in what condition (a beat) I am gonna kill the bastards who did this to them.

**ALI**

What do you want to do?

**HARNAM**

I don't know. All I know that I will not rest till I have taken revenge for the suffering of my sister, my Tej.

**RAM SINGH**

You know a lot of Indians are going to back to India to take part in Gadar.

**HARNAM**

Gadar?

**ALI**

Yes, Gadar. Mutiny, revolution, to overthrow the British government with force. You can join them.

**HARNAM**

You are right. That's what I should do. I am going back to India. I am going to kill those British Sergeants who shot at my sister.

*Enter Santa Singh and Ganda Singh*

**GANDA**

Did you hear?

**RAM SINGH**

What?

**GANDA**

Bhai Mewa Singh of Vancouver, he killed Hopkinson.

**ALI**

What?



**SANTA**

Yes, right there in front of the court. Hopkinson was going to testify in favour of that traitor Bela Singh. Bhai Mewa Singh shot him down there, in full public view and then surrendered to the police.

**RAM SINGH**

Wow! Now that's revenge. That bastard Hopkinson deserved this.

**HARNAM SINGH**

You are absolutely right. He deserved this. But there is somebody else who also deserves this.

**ALI**

Whom are you talking about?

**HARNAM**

Stevens. Member of Parliament, H.H. Stevens.

**RAM SINGH**

No Harnam. You are not doing anything stupid. You are going to India to join the revolutionaries.

**HARNAM**

I will go to India. I will definitely go to India (moves towards exit R).

**ALI**

Where are you going?

**HARNAM**

I am going across the border.

**ALI**

To America? Why?

**HARNAM**

I have some shopping to do.

(END OF SCENE)

*Spotlight Down Center where TARAK is standing. It's a stormy night. Tarak is well bundled up. His face is hardly visible behind his muffler. Enter Harnam.*

**HARNAM**

Is that you Tarak?

**TARAK**

Who are you?

**HARNAM**

I am Harnam Singh, from Abbotsford.

**TARAK**

I don't know you. What is your name?

**HARNAM**

Harnam.

**TARAK**

I am asking you for the last time. If you don't answer correctly, then this meeting is over. What is your name?

**HARNAM**

(a beat)

Gadar.

**TARAK**

What is your religion?

**HARNAM**

Gadar.

**TARAK**

What is meaning of Gadar?

**HARNAM**

Freedom of India.

**TARAK**

Are you ready, Harnam? This will require ultimate sacrifice.

**HARNAM**

I am ready. Mewa Singh has inspired everyone. These atrocities have to stop. No one should suffer the way the passengers of Komagata Maru suffered, the way Harsimran suffered, the way my nephew Tej suffered. This must be stopped.

**TARAK**

That's the spirit my friend. Incidents like Komagata Maru can be stopped only if India becomes a free country. It is useless to expect justice from the British government. And for that purpose, India needs young people like you to go there and wage a war against the British. Gadar is going to be a reality. (Takes out a revolver and gives it to Harnam) Here, take this and go to India. Thousands of Indians are going home to fight the British. Go join them. India needs you. Your country needs you.

*Exit Tarak*

**HARNAM**

(stands in the spotlight with the revolver in his hands)

**V.O.**

One day, your nephew Tej, he became unconscious.

Nobody knows where Harsimran is, in what condition Tej is.

Mewa Singh has killed Hopkinson.

“What we face in British Columbia and Canada is this—whether or not the civilization which finds its highest exemplification in the Anglo-Saxon British rule shall or shall not prevail in the dominion of Canada.

White Canada Forever.

Sounds of gunshots and screams.

M.P. Stevens has defended the government’s decision to send Komagata Maru back to India.

**HARNAM**

(seething with anger)

Stevens. You Bastard.

(END OF SCENE)

*Light go up on L. Some set changes have been made to make the Kitchen/dining room look richer than earlier. This is the house of Member of Parliament Henry Stevens. His picture hangs on Wall UL.*

*Enter Harnam with a revolver in his hands. There is nobody in the room. Harnam looks around, puzzled what to do. He sees a door leading to an inner room UL. He walks towards it. The door*

*opens and Frances comes in through it. Harnam immediately hides his revolver in his pocket.*

**FRANCES**

(lets out a scream, then realizes that it Harnam standing in front of her)  
Harnam? What are you doing here?

**HARNAM**

I..I.. I am ... Madam Frances..What are you doing here?

**FRANCES**

I am visiting my brother. I told you about him. Henry. He is back in town, so I though I'll go visit him.

**HARNAM**

Oh! I'm sorry. It must have been a mistake. I thought this was the house of M.P. Stevens.

**FRANCES**

Oh, But you are right. This is the correct house. M.P. Stevens is my brother. Henry Herbert Stevens is his full name. I of course call him Henry.

**HARNAM**

Stevens is your brother?

**FRANCES**

Well of course he is. Do you want to meet him? Is this about your sister?

**HARNAM**

Yes, this is about my sister. Do you know where she is Madam Frances?

**FRANCES**

In India I believe. That's where the ship went, right?

**HARNAM**

Yes, and do you know what happened there?

**FRANCES**

What?

**HARNAM**

The passengers were fired upon indiscriminately.

**FRANCES**

Oh God! Why?

**HARNAM**

Because your brother had wired the Indian government that there might be mutineers on that ship, with arms and ammunition to wage war against them. Can you believe it Madam Frances? Those people hardly had enough food to survive the high seas, how would they be carrying arms? Was a single shot fired from the ship when the tug boat Sea Lion attacked it? No. They defended themselves by using coal as missiles. Coal, madam Frances, not bullets. But they were greeted with bullets when they reached India. I don't know if my sister is alive or dead. I don't know if my nephew is alive or dead. And if they are alive, where are they? In what condition are they? And you know who is responsible for all this Madam Frances? It's your brother. Member of Parliament H.H. Stevens. (Takes the revolver out). And today he'll have to pay for his sins.

**FRANCES**

(taken aback)

Harnam...What are you doing? No Harnam... This is not right. Everything will be all right.

**HARNAM**

Nothing will be all right as long as people like Stevens are alive. You know Madam Frances, I was going to leave Canada to go to India to fight against the British. Then I thought, what about those who have committed atrocities on Indians in Canada? Who will punish them for their wrong doings? That's when I decided that I will not leave Canada till I have sent Stevens where his other accomplice Hopkinson already is. To Hell.

**FRANCES**

Harnam, you are in a state of shock. You are not thinking clearly. You can't do this. They will catch you, they will hang you.

**HARNAM**

I don't care. All I can think of now is how many Komagata Marus will be sent back if people like Stevens are allowed to stay in power. How many husbands will not meet their wives, how many children will not meet their fathers and how many sisters will not be able to tie Rakhri on their brothers' wrist? No Madam Frances. This has to stop.

**FRANCES**

I once tied a Rakhri on your wrist Harnam. Remember.

**HARNAM**

Yes, I remember.

**FRANCES**

And you promised me something. Do you remember?

*Harnam looks away*

**FRANCES**

You promised that you will never do anything to make me unhappy. You

called me your sister, and I could see it in your eyes, I was your sister that day. Am I not your sister today, Harnam? Will you make this sister of yours unhappy? I don't want to lose two brothers in one day. For the love of your sister Harnam, I beg of you, please forgive Henry. Let him live. Please.

### HARNAM

(A pregnant pause)

Madam Frances, A promise is a promise. Your brother will live. He is a lucky man. He has a sister like you. Please teach him to see beyond the colour of a man's skin.

### FRANCES

Oh Harnam!

### HARNAM

Goodbye Madam Frances. I am going to India. But I will come back. I will come back when my country will be free. Not as a British subject but as a citizen of an independent India. Good Bye. Vande Mataram.

*Exit Harnam*

(END OF SCENE)

*Lights go up.*

*A screen comes on UC. Sonia, Leona and Christine are making their power point presentation.*

### SONIA

376 people, 22 allowed to land, 20 killed in India, Four murdered in Canada. One person hanged and many others imprisoned, these are the statistics.



**CHRISTINE**

But how many stories are hidden behind these statistics.

**LEONA**

Stories of loved ones, of brothers and sisters, of husbands and wives, of friends and relatives, not allowed to meet, to re-unite, to be with their loved ones.

**SONIA**

And today, one hundred years later, let us ask ourselves, did the Komagata Maru story end in 1914?

**CHRISTINE**

Are there still Harnam Singhs among us waiting for their sisters to tie Rakhri on their wrists?

**LEONA**

Is there still a Ram Singh or a Santa Singh waiting to meet his wife or children?

**SONIA**

Or a Hasan Ali wanting to bring his parents here so that he can take care of them.

**CHRISTINE**

Are there still immigrants in Canada forced to live separated from their families?

**SONIA**

If the answer to any of these questions is yes,

**LEONA**

Then the Komagata Maru story is not over, it's definitely not over.