

never have been able to pass yourself off as an Asian except for me. That it was all my fault.

MARCUS: You would do that? *(Pause)* You know, it'll make you look bad.

DHH: Marcus, do you remember the Chinese concept of "face"?

MARCUS: Yeah, but why are you—?

DHH: I'm willing to go out there and lose my face. How 'bout you?

NWOAOC: *New York Times*: staffers probing Chinese investigations cast too wide a net. Written by . . . me. Officials probing accusations of illegal campaign contributions from Chinese donors are investigating a U.S. citizen with—

LEAH *(Overlapping)*: —with no Asian ancestry at all. *(To Marcus)* I'm reading this in the paper. So it can't possibly be true. Right?

MARCUS: Leah, please. Nothing's really changed about me. Just my past, right?

LEAH: I see. Yes, right. Which means, everything's changed about you, Marcus. Did you ever tell me the truth? About anything?

MARCUS: Leah, I love you—that was never a lie. You gotta believe me.

LEAH: I do. And believing you—makes me sick to my stomach. *(Pause)* Don't touch me! *(Exits the play)*

NWOAOC: The origins of this almost comical mishap involve a strange cast of characters, including Tony Award-winning playwright, David Henry Hwang.

DHH: I cast Marcus as an Asian in my play, not knowing he was actually a white man. After I realized my mistake, I tried to conceal my blunder by passing him off as a—Siberian Jew.

NWOAOC *(To the audience)*: How could I resist a story like that? It was just too delicious. *(Pause)* You see? I told the truth. I really have no agenda. *(Exits the play)*

DHH: After the *Times* ran its story unmasking Marcus, Jay Leno joked in his monologue that federal investigators were now planning to go after Pamela and Tommy Lee, Neil Sedaka, and the lead singer from Wang Chung. This marked the turning point in the Chinese espionage scandals of the late 1990s. Shelby's banking committee ended their investigation, without ever subpoenaing my father. Fred Thompson's probe

withered away. Wen Ho Lee spent nine months in solitary confinement before the charges against him were finally dropped by Judge James Parker.

JUDGE JAMES PARKER: I sincerely apologize to you, Dr. Lee, for the unfair manner you were held in captivity . . . which has embarrassed our nation and all of its citizens. *(Exits the play)*

ROCCO: Rocco Palmieri, former aide to Senator Fred Thompson, posting on realclearpolitics.com. So. The Chinese won the first round. But we were on the right track. 9/11 threw this country into an extended distraction phase. Once Osama bin Laden and his cronies have been brought under control, this country will wake up and realize—while we've been expending our time and resources in the Middle East, our real enemies have been taking advantage of this window to make themselves even more formidable. The Chinese investigations aren't over, not by a long shot. They're merely on hiatus until our next war begins—because America's real enemy in the twenty-first century—will be China. *(Exits the play)*

HYH: *New York Times*, October 13, 2005: Henry Y. Hwang, who founded the first Asian American-owned federally chartered bank in the Continental United States, died Saturday at his home in San Marino, California. He was seventy-seven. *(Exits the play)*

DHH: My father's obituary was picked up by the wire services, and ran in over two hundred and fifty media outlets, from Mississippi to Taiwan. I thought he would've liked that. *(Pause)* Marcus came to my father's memorial service. Afterwards, we went for a walk. *(To Marcus)* I always kind of believed Dad would be able to talk his way out of anything. He was the only person I'd ever known who went in for an IRS audit and came out with a bigger refund.

MARCUS: I see your point.

DHH: I can't believe he's really gone.

MARCUS: I'm sorry.

DHH: But here's the part that gets me. In the end, he even lost his dream—and you know something? Maybe that's what really killed him. Sick as I got of hearing his shtick, it had been Dad's whole life: his faith that in America, you can imagine who you want to be—and, through sheer will and determination, become that person. *(Pause)* If only it were true.

MARCUS: But it is. Look at me.

DHH: Huh?

MARCUS: I imagined myself as something completely different from what I was—

DHH: No, no, no, no.

MARCUS: And then, through sheer will and determination, just like your dad—

DHH: I can't believe you're going there. Listen, you are nobody's idea of the American Dream, okay?

MARCUS: Then why did you create me?

(Pause.)

DHH: Uh, Marcus?

MARCUS: Be honest. I'm a character. In this play you've written about your dad, and yourself, and what happened with that, that reporter who we're not supposed to say his real name.

DHH: I . . . wasn't planning to get into this.

MARCUS: I think you should.

DHH: No, see, I was planning to maintain the ambiguity about reality versus fiction—through the end of the play.

MARCUS: Well, I think that's intellectually dishonest.

DHH: Hey, hey! If you're my creation, do what I say!

MARCUS: C'mon, Dave—any characters worth their salt eventually go their own way. Now tell the truth. You can do it.

DHH: This is . . . kind of humiliating.

MARCUS: It's a little late in the show to start worrying about humiliating yourself.

DHH *(To the audience)*: Marcus is . . . a fictional character. Created by me.

MARCUS: Why?

DHH: Because . . . I'm a writer. And, in the end, everything's always all about me.

MARCUS: And?

DHH: Okay. Years ago, I discovered a face—one I could live better and more fully than anything I'd ever tried. But as the years went by, my face became my mask. And I became just another actor—running around in yellow face. *(Pause)* That's where you came in. To take words like "Asian" and "American," like "race" and "nation," mess them up so bad no one

has any idea what they even mean anymore. Cuz that was Dad's dream: a world where he could be Jimmy Stewart. And a white guy—can even be an Asian. *(Pause)* That's what you do after your father dies. You start making his dream your own.

MARCUS: And now, you don't need me anymore. *(Pause)* But do me a favor. Write me a happy ending, okay?

DHH: They're not my specialty . . . but I'll try. I'll send you to a Chinese village—called Zhencong. *(To the audience)* Final e-mail. From Marcus G. Dahlman to David Henry Hwang. Received . . . sometime tomorrow.

(Dong Track #2: "We Close the Village for Rituals." Marcus appears in a separate space from DHH.)

MARCUS: Dear David, It's happened at last. Nine months after my arrival in Dong country. Tonight, as they gathered together for the "big song," I saw a couple of villagers gesturing for me to come closer. I got up, and ascended the steps under the eaves to the pagoda. And no one stopped me. They saw who I am, and gave me "face." As I opened my mouth, the music began to speak to me, in words only I could hear:

Get over yourself.
This song is only doing
What it has always done:
Taking in voices
From all the lands
And all the peoples,
Who have ever crossed its path.
Though that road has been messy,
It made this song.
For nothing of value,
Nothing which lasts,
Nothing human,
Is ever pure.

(Pause.)

I joined the "big song," and found the thing I had lost. A reason to hope. And now, I can go home.

(Music out.)

DHN *(To the audience):* Hey, it could happen. For Marcus, the play ends. And I go back to work, searching for my own face.

(Lights fade to black.)

END OF PLAY



god