

Excerpt from

MADAME HO

by

Eugenie Chan

Draft 4.5

June 10, 2013

c/o

Toochis Morin

The Brant Rose Agency

6671 Sunset Blvd

Ste 1584 B

Los Angeles, CA 90028

(323) 460-6464

trose@brantroseagency.com

or

eachan@earthlink.net

©2011 Eugenie Chan

All Rights Reserved

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY: *MADAME HO*

The *Madame Ho* project is supported generously by grants from the San Francisco Arts Commission: Cultural Equity Grant, TBA' s CA\$H Grant for Artists, the Creativity Fund at New Dramatists, the Lippmann Family Fund, the Handel Fellowship, and residencies at Hedgebrook, Byrdcliffe, and Sundance Ucross.

Madame Ho was read as part of Cutting Ball Theater's Risk Is This Festival Of New Experimental Plays on May 28 and 29, 2011, the Playwrights Foundation's Resident Playwrights Graduate Reading Series on June 26, 2011, the Magic Theatre's Asian Explosion, February 12, 2012, New Dramatists (Creativity Fund) May 4, 2012 and May 16, 2013, Magic Theatre Virgin Play Reading Series, April 1, 2013, Great Plains Theater Conference, May 31, 2013.

Characters

All characters are Chinese and immigrants to America, except Church Lady.

HO, both old and young, a brothel madam

CROW, way old, a bird, shape-shifter, and *amah*

BO, old/young, Ho's husband, a highbinder

Rose, late teens, a reluctant prostitute

NUMBAH THREE, 20s, a longtime prostitute

Daisy, 14, Ho & Bo's daughter, American born

MUI, 14, a servant girl

AUCTIONEER/ LABORER/ MAN

CHURCH LADY, middle aged Protestant mission woman

Time & Place

Turn of the Last Century; Here & Now. A shape-shifting landscape that moves from San Francisco Chinatown, Gold Country, California, and Here – where the play is performed.

Note from Playwright

Madame Ho is loosely structured, think figuratively structured, as a vaudeville-esque variety show of sorts. Give yourself permission to be as loose (or as literal) with the idea of vaudeville or caberet-style theatrics. Characters can remain on stage, or not. But do let them do the work of moving props, furniture, and working the audience as you see fit.

SCENE

Here. Now. San Francisco. An old Chinatown entertainment parlor before opening. Chairs and tables pushed to the side. HO, in 19th c. Western dress, enters, sweeping up Last night's debris. CROW flies in behind her SQUAWKING.

HO

I see I see
Eggshell eggshell cigarette butt
Whiskey soda eggshell
cigar ash goddamn whiskey stain
Fucking cocksucker work a girlee to the bone shit piss.../

Crow caws, pointing out the audience.

CROW

/Pee-po! [people]

Ho notices.

HO

Who you?

Long stare.

I don't know you.
What you want?
Chow mein. Chop suey. Breakfast.
Cheh.
(beat)
None o'that here.
Here only girls girls girls.

Crow grabs a slate. She writes "X X X. X X X!" and smiles.

You like?
Cheh.
It's America!
Everyday alla good time here!
What you waiting for?

As if speaking to a foreigner.

HO

I am Ho.
This is Crow.
We have a show.
So let us go.
Gentlemen! And ladies!

Crow writes on the slate, WAY BACK
1896.

CROW

WAY BACK 1896

Ho and Crow rush to assemble a
desk & chair. Crow throws down
school books. Ho pulls out DAISY,
14, in school clothes, and pushes
her into her seat. Daisy holds a
toy horse.

HO

Our star with the voice of a songbird. My daughter, Daisy!
She likes to sing.

DAISY (singing)

A-B-C-D-E-F G-H-I-J-K-L-M-N-O-P

(Beat.)

Hello. This is my horse. His name is Moses.

I know. I speak your language.

He is a baby. He is from the Bible and has saved the
Egyptians. He is a hero. He has told the Chosen Ones to
put a big X in blood on their doors. That way the angel of
Death will not visit and smite their first born man. That
didn't happen here.

I am a girl.

Say hello, Moses. Hello.

She has Moses whinny like a
banshee. Crow pulls her from the
chair and pushes her into the
wings.

HO

We love girls here. All kinda them. Especially the one from overseas. Chop chop!

Crow dons a sailor hat. Writes
"PACIFIC OCEAN. ROCKING BOAT."

CROW

PACIFIC OCEAN. ROCKING BOAT

MUI, 14, in rags, and ROSE, 19, in elegant brocade enter. Mui swings her arms and chatters to Rose who tries not to throw up. She is seasick.

MUI to Audience

My name
My name
My name
MisseeThankYouNameAhMoy.

(to Rose)

I go America to sweep big house
I go America to save family
I go *Mee Gok* to sing song
I go *Mee Gok* to pick flower
I learn new word to go America.
"Hello." "Hello."
It mean good morning. Good morning.
I go America pick up a piece of gold
I go *Mee Gok* earn a dollar
I learn another new word to go to America
"Daisy." "Daisy." It mean flower.
My name
My name
MisseeThankYouNameAhMoy.
Four new words.
I can count
Yaht yee saam seih
1-2 -3-4-

She counts on her fingers. At five she gets stuck.

This one I don't know
This one too
This one too
This one too

MUI

I go to Mee Gok to feed my mommy daddy Sister Two Sister
Three Sister Four Sister Five

(to Audience)

Brother One he so cute Brother One everyone favorite
Brother Two Brother Two Brother Two he go away he go away
mommy cry everyone cry then Sister Four go away too go away
never comeback same with Ah Pau same with Ah Goong same
with they go away.

They go away chicken duck only thing don't go away is water
oh the water the water the water take away the seeds the
shoots the plants Brother Two Sister Four
I feel so happy go America
Far away across vast ocean
Called *Taih Pingh Yeungh*
Called Pacific
Anther English word
I know a lot
I am prepared for America

I will clean best of my ability
I will cook I will wash I will burp babies and hold them
over gulley when they poop

Hello MisseThankYouNameAhMoy.

What you name, Lady?
What you name, Lady?
Why, you go America?

ROSE

My name is Miss Soon-to-Be-Missus.
I go to America to meet my husband.

Mui claps her hands and jumps up
and down.

MUI

Hello hello hello hello hello!

They exit.

SCENE

Ho takes off her vest, shakes and straightens herself out, loosens a bodice, exposes a shoulder, and turns 18. Crow writes: EVEN MORE LONG TIME AGO.

CROW

EVEN MORE LONG TIME AGO, CALIFORNIA. (Playing it up.) When Ho first-come this country. She dig for gold

Crow sticks a pine tree behind Ho. Ho squats, lifts her skirts to expose her legs.

CROW

Remember your lines.

HO (rough)

I don't do no diddle in the dirt.
I like me a clean sheet
Cot that don't squeak
Man that don't make a noise
You make a noise, *ngau jai*? [cowboy]
You make a loud noise, cowboy?
Or you got a good clean silencer
Slice through the night?

Bo enters from audience. Pulls up a chair.

CROW (wink wink, nudge nudge)

A "customer" named Bo.

Bo appraises Ho.

BO

Nice. Nice.

Daisy enters and crosses the stage with Moses, making him gallop and neigh.

TRANSITION

BO (to Auctioneer and Rose off stage)

Hey!!! Hey!!!

Rose and Auctioneer enter.

Crow writes: SAN FRANCISCO.
CHINATOWN BASEMENT. ARRIVAL.

CROW

SAN FRANCISCO. CHINATOWN BASEMENT. ARRIVAL.

SCENE

An auction. Shadows of women in a row. Rose stands, wrists bound behind her back. A deer in the headlights.

HO to Bo

Get a good one.
Get a moneymaker
Get her
Get her good

Bo

Piss on me
I know how to pick 'em

AUCTIONEER

Do I hear 400 4-10 4-20 4-20 4-20 4-20!
4-40 500 500! for the one with the rosebud tits.
5-50 for the pearl!
6 hunnert for the virgen on the left.
Fetch a price. Fetch a price. First night will make you a million. She got a gold mine between those haunches.
6-10 6-20
6-3 6-3 6-3 6-4 6-4 6-4 6-5 6-6 6-6 6-6! 6-7 6-8 6--9 6-9
6-9

BO

690. 690 Buckaroos for you.

AUCTIONEER

700! Going once! Twice!

BO

Shit. Lemme look at you.

AUCTIONEER

710. 710.

Bo pulls back on Rose's braid.

ROSE in pain

Ahhhhh...

AUCTIONEER

Her mane is gen-u-ine gua-ren-teed.
No extensions. No fake. All real. True.
750! Come on.

BO

Strip.

ROSE

My husband.

AUCTIONEER

750! Over there!

BO

Chui saam.

ROSE

Is this my husband? Is this the one?

AUCTIONEER

Chui ah.

BO

Mee naap! [jacket]

Bo rips open her jacket. Rose
struggles.

BO

Aaagh! Bitch bites.

Bo grabs her in a chokehold. It
hurts.

ROSE

Aaagh...

BO

Hojie! [Sister Ho]

AUCTIONEER

She's a live one.
Outta the starting gate.
750 going.

Ho enters. Steps in. Slaps her.
Rose stops.

HO

Easy. Easy.
Make it easy on you.

Ho takes Rose's face in her hands.

HO

Look at me.
Easy.
Your name?

AUCTIONEER

Only one scar. 850!

HO

Your name.

ROSE

(Silence)

AUCTIONEER

A few moles. Those are lucky signs. 900!

HO

Your name.

BO

Bui saam. [camisole]

Auctioneer rips off her camisole.

ROSE

()

BO

Rosy rosy tits. Firm.

AUCTIONEER

900!

He squeezes.

BO

Firm. Never been squeezed before.

ROSE in pain

Aaaagh...

BO

Tender. 900. Rosy.

HO

Your name Rosy.

BO

Willow waist.

HO

Rosy look at me.
You hungry?

AUCTIONEER

Do I hear 950?!

ROSE

()

BO

Ribs intact.

HO

I got some nice poach chicken for you.
You ever eat chicken.

Rose nods.

HO

Good good
You high class.

BO

Turn around. Around.

AUCTIONEER

One Thousand American Dollars?!

Turn.
I be here.

HO

Bend over.

BO

My husband

ROSE

Bend.

BO

Imagine
Poach chicken.
Mau ha [Bend]
I be here.

HO

Rose bends over.

1000!

AUCTIONEER

HO

Good girl
Good girl

AUCTIONEER

That tail's all real. 100 percent clean. Imagine the
retail price she'll fetch the first time. Call your shots.

Stand up.

BO

HO

Kei hou
Kei hou

AUCTIONEER

1500! My god.

Ho helps her up.

ROSE to BO

Are you my husband?

BO

Open your mouth.

My husband	ROSE
Bend.	BO
Imagine Poach chicken. <i>Mau ha</i> [Bend] I be here.	HO
	Rose bends over.
1000!	AUCTIONEER
Good girl Good girl	HO
	AUCTIONEER
	That tail's all real. 100 percent clean. Imagine the retail price she'll fetch the first time. Call your shots.
Stand up.	BO
<i>Kei hou</i> <i>Kei hou</i>	HO
1500! My god.	AUCTIONEER
	Ho helps her up.
Are you my husband?	ROSE to BO
Open your mouth.	BO
My husband.	ROSE
Open your mouth.	BO

HO

Hoi hauh Hoi hauh.

BO

Hoi hauh!

He squeezes her jaw open. parts
her lips.

BO

Wider

AUCTIONEER

All her teeth are there. Still has them all. Good teeth.
Untouched. YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS. Smoooooooooth. Two
thousand dollars! Two thousand dollars! For you!

And look at her feet!
Her feet!
Teeny tiny lotus feet

ROSE

They are my husband's!!!

AUCTIONEER

3000 for those melt in your mouth morsels.

HO to BO

3000. High rollers will flock

BO

You sure.

HO

Of course.

BO

Better be.

HO

Always get what you want.

BO

3000!

AUCTIONEER

3000! Sold!

ROSE

Where is my house?

HO

Where your husband is.
Your house is your husband.
(Beat.)

END OF EXCERPT