

Be Free

by 賴映蓉 Yin-Rong Charlotte Lai

CHARACTERS

CONNIE, a waitress

PHILIP, her husband

TERRY, a lawyer

OLD JOHN, a customer

THE MAN, a customer with a cage

Act 1

An untidy small living room. At the center of the stage are a small sofa and a table in a mess. The ground is full of books, withered flowers, and a broken vase. The back wall hangs a picture of the honeymoon couple. The right side of the picture is the door of the kitchen. And the left of the back wall is the entrance.

(A sound of someone turning the door knob from the entrance. The door opens and comes in Connie. Connie closes the door with a bang. Her husband jumps up right away. He pulls and drags her hair violently.)

PHILIP What the hell are you doing? Why do you come back home so late? Don't you know I am waiting for you? I am starving over here.

CONNIE *(With her shaking hands she tries to save her hair, but not to enrage her angry husband.)* It...it... it's because there are too many customers today. I can't come off work on time.

PHILIP *(Looses her hair to be free.)* Are you paid extra for overtime?

CONNIE Yes, of course.

PHILIP *(Holds her in his arms.)* Oh! Baby, I do not mean to be so rude. You know I love you more than anything. Maybe you should call me first. Waiting here so long, I am just too worried about you, so I am anxious and then I lose my control a little bit. I love you, baby. You will forgive me, right?

CONNIE uh... *(Pause)* Yes. Of course.

PHILIP Say you love me.

CONNIE I love you.

PHILIP And more than anything.

CONNIE I love you *(Pause)* more than anything.

PHILIP Good. I love you, too. *(He kisses her and then releases her.)* So, where is your salary?

CONNIE In my pocket. *(Reaching for the money in her pocket.)*

PHILIP *(Stretches out his hand.)* Give it to me. I will spend it on some worthwhile usage. You know what? Next Friday is the third anniversary of our marriage. We should have a candlelight dinner at a romantic restaurant. There will be a lot of things. I should make a reservation. I should have a nice suit and a pair of leather shoes. And I need a camera to record our third anniversary. And... what I should do? Oh! I should buy some flowers to you. Red roses, right? I always remember your favorite flower. What a good husband I am! I believe the money will bring us an unforgettable night.

CONNIE *(With no emotion.)* Yes, it will. Just keep planning, and I go to cook, OK?

PHILIP *(Pleasingly.)* Sure. You're always busy, but you are still a nice wife.

(Connie walks to the kitchen with a tired face, leaving Philip who counts money happily.)

Act 2

In an ordinary restaurant. The right and back side is a door, and the left and front is the gate. There are some tables, chairs, and some customers in the center.

(Connie is serving customers. Old John comes in, walks to the table of the center, sits down, and takes out a newspaper. Then, Connie walks to him.)

CONNIE Good evening. What is your menu today?

OLD JOHN *(Reading the newspaper.)* How are you today?

CONNIE If you order right now, I will be fine. I hope I can get off early.

OLD JOHN *(Still reading the newspaper.)* Yes, I know. You need time to be dressed up. You are going to a date, aren't you? With a handsome man, not your bad husband.

CONNIE *(Astonished.)* Shh... how do you know this?

OLD JOHN There is nothing I don't know. *(Moves the paper lower and reveals his eyes.)* It is not a good way to relax yourself from a terrible marriage. You are just trying to escape. And it will get more troubles.

CONNIE I just... *(Interrupted.)*

OLD JOHN Just give me cold water with no ice, a sandwich, an apple pie, and a cup of coffee with sugar beside.

CONNIE Alright. *(Connie leaves.)*

(After a while, Connie walks to old John with a plate and puts the food on the table.)

OLD JOHN You want to know today's horoscope? The suggestion for your star sign is to be yourself, using your wings to fly high in the blue sky. *(He puts down the paper and starts to eat.)*

(Connie sits opposite to old John, pondering. After a while, a man who carries a cage comes in. The creature in the cage looks very inactive. Connie gazes at the little creature, pondering. Suddenly, she gets up and walks directly to the cage.)

CONNIE Excuse me, Sir. I want to buy this bird with all my money. *(Taking out all the money in her pocket.)*

THE MAN But.... *(Interrupted.)*

CONNIE Please.

THE MAN Alright. In fact, you can buy this kind of bird everywhere.

CONNIE *(Whispering.)* Yep, there are captive birds and people everywhere.

THE MAN With this cage?

CONNIE No. I don't need it any more. *(Giving the money to the man.)*

THE MAN You pay too much for it.

CONNIE No. It is the payment for freedom. *(She grasps the creature carefully.)*

(Connie opens the gate and frees the creature. Standing there, Connie murmurs "be free, be free..." Suddenly, Connie turns back and makes a call. Then, she goes on her work. About five o'clock, a handsome man comes in with a bunch of white lilies. He is Terry Apolskin, Connie's affair. He chooses a hidden seat. Connie walks to his opposite seat and sits.)

TERRY *(Gives the flowers to Connie.)* For you. Your favorite flower. Why do you choose here to date today?

CONNIE I just want to tell you something in a familiar place.

TERRY What? Is it important?

CONNIE I think... we can't go on like this.

(Silence.)

TERRY You never talk about this. Why? *(Pause)* But... I won't give up my marriage. I am a lawyer. I have a fine reputation. Although I am tired of my wife and my marriage, and I am fond of you, I still can't ignore moral judgment. You understand what I mean? Let's just go on like this, OK?

CONNIE OK. *(Pause)* In fact, I just want to say good bye.

TERRY *(Amazed.)* What? *(Embarrassed.)* Oh...uh...you're not...asking....

CONNIE No. Originally no. Now definitely no! What I want to say is only good bye. *(Pause)* If we go on, this situation will force you and me to an endless hole sooner or later. The only thing I need is to get free from my marriages, live my life and be myself. Be myself. Do what I want to do. So, farewell. *(Going toward the gate and leaving the stage.)*

Act 3

(In the restaurant which Connie works, Connie is busy working. Philip comes in with three red roses and yells at Connie and he pulls and drags her hair violently.)

PHILIP Don't you know what day it is today? Don't you know you are going to dine with your dear husband? Why, you are still dressed like this? OK. I don't want to destroy this romantic atmosphere. I will give you three minutes to dress up. One, two, three.... *(Watching his fine watch and Counting.)*

(Connie goes to dress up. After a while, she comes in the stage and sits in old John's old seats. Philip stops counting and steps toward Connie and sits.)

PHILIP Hey, baby. These roses are for you. You know what these three roses mean?

CONNIE Yes, of course.

PHILIP I love you, just like you love me. So, am I handsome today?

CONNIE Yes, of course.

PHILIP This suit costs me a lot of money. Look, my new watch. I think I need a new watch to fit this new suit. It looks nice on me, right?

CONNIE Yes, of course.

PHILIP Baby, you know what? Tonight, I decide to declare one important thing. Since we have been married for three years, maybe we should have our own baby. This is what you always want. So I decide to give you a baby as a present. But you have to promise that you will love me more than the baby after the baby is born. You can not love the child too much, or you will spoil the child. Promise, you love me, and you will love me more in the future.

CONNIE *(Calmly.)* No, I want a divorce.

PHILIP What? You say it again.

CONNIE I want a divorce.

PHILIP You are just kidding, aren't you?

CONNIE No! I do want to get divorced. Divorce is the present for you to celebrate our third anniversary, and for me to get free. *(She stands up, turns back and steps out of the gate.)*

(At first, Philip is stupefied. Then, he starts to shout and curse. The light is darkened gradually. The curtain is lowered slowly.)