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## Sext of Saudade

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Annie Rachele Lanzillotto

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## Sext of Saudade

Fawzia Afzal-Khan, Annie Rachele Lanzillotto

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# Pieces

## Sext of Saudade

*Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Annie Rachele Lanzillotto*

### Introduction

This play was written collaboratively by two playwright/performers: myself, a Pakistani American; and Italian American Annie Lanzillotto. Lanzillotto came to me about the possibility of creating a narrative script for possible performance as a staged reading at Dixon Place in New York City, in the fall of 2008. With its history of supporting queer feminist experimental performance work, Dixon Place had proved a particularly hospitable space for Lanzillotto's performance art focusing on queer, working-class Italian American-inflected material culled from her life experiences as a butch-identified Bronx-born-and-raised theatre worker and cancer survivor.

On the surface, my life's trajectory was very different: an academic teaching for the past 20 years at a state university in New Jersey, born and raised in Pakistan of middle-class roots, straddling between my birth culture of Muslim liberalism but social conservatism, and my present of public feminist activism but also a traditionally identified heterosexual gendered identity as wife and mother, the latter a site of ongoing self-questioning. What could we two

women possibly share in common? That was the question we set out to explore in the script we created over a month of meetings at my middle-class suburban home in Westchester, NY, and at Lanzillotto's mother's apartment in a less-affluent section of lower Westchester where Lanzillotto was living, temporarily without a home of her own.

The process proved difficult due to conflicting personalities, creative styles, class and gender identifications, and various sexual tensions between and amongst us and others in our lives. And then, the uneasy yet exhilarating triangulation that night of our performance, the air pregnant with intimations of violence birthed by too tight an embrace in a suffocating space. Still, both the process and the product proved to be stimulating and challenging in productive ways, for us as well as our full-house audience of the one-night show performed on 27 September 2008, comprising mostly friends and acquaintances from our different and overlapping circles, as well as a few of my students and colleagues.

The living-room setting of Dixon Place proved to be just the right ambience for a

***Fawzia Afzal-Khan** is University Distinguished Scholar and Professor of English, and Director of Women's and Gender Studies at Montclair State University, NJ. She has published articles on feminist theory, postcolonial theory, and Pakistani politics and culture; has authored two books including *A Critical Stage: The Role of Secular Alternative Theatre in Pakistan* (Seagull, 2005); and is editor of two anthologies, including *Shattering the Stereotypes: Muslim Women Speak Out* (Interlink, 2005). Her memoir, *Lahore with Love: Growing Up with Girlfriends Pakistani Style*, is forthcoming from Syracuse University Press (March 2010). She is a published poet and playwright, as well as a vocalist trained in the North Indian Classical tradition.*

***Annie Rachele Lanzillotto** is a Bronx-born private pilot, lesbian poet. She writes, acts, directs, and produces works in her community, and spins ice. For the 2001 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, she was named one of "200 essential New Yorkers," representing New York in CityLore's NYC Neighborhood Tent on the green in Washington, DC, with her installation *A Stickball Memoir*. Publications include memoir essays, "Cosa Mangia Oggi" in *Gastropolis: New York City and Food* (Columbia University Press, 2008) and "Nine Eleven Breadballs" in *Foods of Affection* (Voices In Italian Americana, 2008). She has performed at Dixon Place, the Kitchen, the Arthur Avenue Retail Market, and the Smithsonian, amongst others.*

performance that played like an intimate family feud between competing sisters—I (S/HE) literally had to slap Annie (HER) and call her derogatory names like “fat bitch” to get her to shut up and allow me to get some of my lines in edge-wise. Was I jealous of the laughs and audience adoration she was getting that encouraged her to string out her scenes to outrageous extemporaneous lengths, while I was fuming backstage waiting to go on? Even when I *was* onstage, Annie would just keep going on and on and on... This was her way of “letting the event just unfold, baby, in an organic way” as she said to me later by way of explanation when I accosted her angrily for sabotaging my performance.

Or was I simply in a state of rage...maybe not at her even...but at what she represented onstage, and maybe in “real” life: the free spirit, making and unmaking her gender identity as she pleased, a penis doll strapped on between her legs, performing prayers side-by-side with Muslim men in an Egyptian mosque, traveling wherever she pleased, tied to no man, woman, or child, while I was caught, in a trap of my own making, but railing, railing, at the injustice of it all... mounting my petty rebellions at the institution of marriage through dangerous play...puerile, sickening, cause of my cancer...eating me up from the inside...why am I so weak, and she so strong...she too is a hypocrite, she wants what I want...yes, women can never be other women’s friends...even dykes are full of shit...

The audience was horrified at this no-holds-barred performance. They felt the oppressive heat mount uncontrollably. One audience member even had to rush out and throw up in the middle of the production... And many who know us/me felt the tension to be unbearably painful, as they later confessed. For my colleague with whom I was team-teaching a course on literary theory that term, the play was one of the clearest instantiations of Brechtian alienation. It was the high level of discomfort unleashed by the play’s content and our performance in which we literally came to blows, screaming our heads off at many moments, and me slapping Annie around the tiny stage space, fighting to be heard, that generated the most interest and thoughtful introspection. “It was like being inside a family

feud,” he later confided to me, “and not just witnessing but being a part of the unraveling of these two lives, the pain of acknowledging the massive untruths of life itself, whether Muslim, Christian, atheist, female, male or something in between.”

—Fawzia Afzal-Khan

## Preset

2 microphones on stands, downstage right and downstage left

upstage wall painted white  
table

director’s chair, another chair

clothesline on back wall to hang *burqa* and man’s *kameez* (Pakistani man’s shirt)

## Scene One: How the Double-Booked Rehearsal Space Reunites Old Flirtatious Acquaintances

*(S/HE in rehearsal studio, awaiting her director, taking inventory of her props and commenting.)*

S/HE: *Burqa*—’cause all Pakistani women wear burqa, hence the burqa

*Chador*—that’s my husband’s chador, that’s his kameez—you’ll hear about him

Pretty shoes...

gun...

prayer rug...facing due east

red dress—yeah I’m wearing it, what do you think I’m the *puta*?

glasses—’cause I’m a professor...alright, you can’t put me in a box

powdered donuts—he likes American donuts. Where is he? *(S/HE calls for the film to play.)*

*(Lights dim to out. Video on: Payal—images of feet running through Karachi’s Empress market, a visual reminder of the glory days of the British Empire, now a faded, dirty marketplace where meats and vegetables are sold. As film finishes: Lights up.)*

S/HE: Pretty Eastern feet! Empress market. Exotic anklets. I came to the West to get away from this bullshit. Fuck him! With his film noir



Figure 1. "'Cause I'm a professor...alright, you can't put me in a box." Fawzia Afzal-Khan, *Sext of Saudade*, 27 September 2008, Dixon Place, New York. (Photo courtesy of Nady Richard)

ending. Wanting the woman to be dead in the end. Guess who won that argument! Bepawl my acnestis! That's what I told him. That's English for, Cover me in saliva on that part of my back where I cannot scratch.

(S/HE sings in Urdu: "Baajay, payal meri.")

I wanna do the Western thing now. Play me track two. And give me a spotlight please.

(Audio up: "Would You" [...sleep with me]. S/HE dances playfully and continues speaking.)

Is that you? What? Who are you? What are you doing there?

Dance with me. I remember you, you're the butch that flirted with me at Edvige's party. A...

HER: No names! (covering S/HE's mouth.)



Figure 2. "Mi scassasti a minchia! I'm not getting pulled into no femme's script no more." Annie Rachele Lanzillotto and Fawzia Afzal-Khan, *Sext of Saudade*, 27 September 2008, Dixon Place, New York. (Photo courtesy of Nady Richard)



Figure 3. "I'll direct you but we gotta change the script. Fuck this Foxtrot." Annie Rachele Lanzillotto and Fawzia Afzal-Khan, *Sext of Saudade*, 27 September 2008, Dixon Place, New York. (Photo courtesy of Nady Richard)

S/HE: An han An han anhan...nananana. You're right on time to be in my script.

HER: I got my own script. I'm here 'cause I booked the damn space, She Whateva...

S/HE: She "whatever??" Fuck you. I am S/he-Who-Must-Be-Obedied. Don't you forget it baby.

Now dance with me. You know you want to seduce me.

She wants to seduce me. So what are you working on?

HER: Mi scassasti a minchia!

I'm not getting pulled into no femme's script no more. And I certainly don't wanna seduce you. I'm through with women.

I'm through with all that. I'm cured! I'm in remission nine months!

S/HE: Oh forget all the cancer, buddy.

HER: I'm talking about women. I'm on a fast! It's Ramadan!

S/HE: Oh you butches. C'mon. One and Two and One and. One and Two and. Rock, Rock, Back Step. Rock, Rock, Back Step.

Tell me your script. I want to cannibalize your script. Mmmm Mmmm Mmm Mmmm.

HER: Animale! It's my streetcry pushcart peddler shtick. U pesce. U pesce. Chi mangi pesce mai morite. Who eats my fish will never die! Va scendere signora. Vieni qua.

S/HE: Very Good. Your show's about your bloody pushcarts, and my show, well I dunno, but I know you can be him. Hahaha. I love it. Every butch's dream. I need a director. Forget the pushcart peddlers. You can take the fucking man's place, and be the director. That's what all you butches want. You think you can push me?

HER: I know how to push into you, baby.

What! You want me to boss you around? Every femme wants to cast me as her bully.

S/HE: What are you doing... bloody butch trying to be a man? Ah fuck. What do you think a femme is? Come on ask me ask me.

HER: Alright. Jeezus. Morti facciola ca nun ti ricugghi. What's a femme?

S/HE: A butch in disguise. Funny hah? Laugh! Now ask me what a butch is?

HER: Madonnaaa. Malanova di tia. What's a butch?

S/HE: It's you wanting to be me.

HER: Dio Mio. Stop this you trying to get me to seduce you crap. Show me your script.

S/HE: Just like a man. Dictating to a woman. Well I ain't taking your dictation. Got it?

HER: Ah! But that's the secret! Every femme secretly wants a DICK-tator. You want to be bullied? Bully yourself around.

Be careful. I injured my hand.

I'm going out for coffee. When I'm back, I want you outta here so I can get to work. Ciao.

S/HE: Please Please Please. Direct me my darling. Got it? Be in my script dammit, youbutchyou. Please. Please.

HER: (*Kryptonite moment: losing power*) Stop. Stop. Stop being The Cunt in Control. CUNTrolling.

Get up and Sit down. One hour. I'll give you one hour. That's it. I'll direct you but we gotta change the script. Fuck this Foxtrot.

(*Audio up: "That Girl Is So Dangerous"*)

Get the fuck off me. Leviti davanti! Non mi rompere i coglione! Madonna! Botta di sangu! Botta di vilenu! Malirittu 'i quannu fu!

(*HER drags S/HE offstage, claps her hands that she's rid of her.*)

## Scene Two: The Table of the Feast

HER: Bah! Finalmente! (*Resumes pushcart peddler stance and cry. Enacts the opposite of shaving ritual, cutting her hair and spirit-gumming her face with her own hair cuttings, then gathering audience's hair cuttings while telling a parable about a fish.*)

(*S/HE enters in burqa and Statue of Liberty crown, in silent action without HER noticing, and then holding machine gun overhead in silent action in a Statue of Liberty pose.*)

HER: Look me in the eye. Now, tell me what the fuck is going on with you. No more bullshit hiding behind gender exteriors.

S/HE: I can't live like this anymore. My man's reading my text messages again. Here, read for yourself.



HER: What the fuck?  
Autumn Tryst? I wanna  
fuck you at the Statue of  
Liberty? Oh God. That's  
like that boy in Cairo,  
Koolib: "Ya Habibi, make  
luff to me efrey Tuesday  
night at ze Sphinx." Can  
you believe that?

S/HE: Actually I can.  
Hence my Statue of  
Liberty. We're like that,  
you know, we people from  
sexually repressed  
societies. Oh yeah well.  
I'm a piece of crap,  
carrying on again, and that  
man's busting me again.  
(S/HE standing up as *Da  
Man*.) You bloody whore!

You're at it again! After you swore you stopped!

HER: Sit down. It's not like that. She, she,  
sheshe shshhh... You just need to ride your  
inner motorcycle.

But you know, I could challenge you. The  
Bible says, if you don't want the feast, get  
away from the king's table. It's like you have  
to sacrifice. Sacrificio.

S/HE: (*Food frenzy orgy with HER, milk, donuts*)  
NO!! I want the feast. I want all the feasts. I  
want to eat at the table of marriage, and of  
solitude; the table of plenty and the table of  
none. I want to eat and drink and drown in the  
feasts of fornication and suck the milk from the  
full teats of adultery i want to sit at the table of  
the straightest of laces and thence to the table  
spread with fruits of all types i want to feel their  
juices running down my chinny chin chin so  
with a huff and a puff i can blow all their  
narrow houses down. They're made of straw  
and paper and the occasional brick easy to  
dissemble and disassemble.

HER: Brava! Brava! Frittella di zucchero, latte.  
Voglio alletare adesso!

S/HE: We both know what happens to women  
who do not carve out a space for themselves!

(*Hot lights up on backwall: red. S/HE aims gun at  
her own head, shoots herself, to offstage voiceover  
sound effects from audience member. S/HE lifts the*



Figure 4. "I want all the feasts." Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Annie Lanzillotto,  
Sext of Saudade, 27 September 2008, Dixon Place, New York. (Photo  
courtesy of Nady Richard)

*burqa off and leans back against the white wall in  
her red dress, in a movement sequence simulating  
the whole body getting riddled with bullets and being  
sexually liberated at the same time. HER ceremoni-  
ously hangs the burqa against the back wall. S/HE  
sits at the harmonium. Light change to a soft blue.)*

### Scene Three: Haji

S/HE: (*Playing harmonium*) I met her when she  
was nine. We were both nine. I used to pride  
myself on being the youngest and the smartest  
in the class, and she came along and beat me  
by a month. She was tall to my small; she was  
curvaceous to my flat iron chest at the time. She  
had Sofia Loren eyes. We became inseparable.  
She was like a sister I never had. Haji, Haji, Haji.  
She got her period at eight or nine.

I learned about Leonard Cohen from her, "Like  
a bird on a wire... I tried in my way..." Haji was  
a live wire. In college, I got her into acting. Of  
course she upstaged me. She was a painter. She  
got enrolled in the only prestigious painting  
school in Pakistan. Her class of fine arts was  
only one other student, a man. He had this  
really older man affect. He called himself "Sufi"  
with a beard. She fell for him. She'd say, "He's  
wonderful. He's deep. He really cares about the  
poor." He was so not right for her. He made  
her doubt herself. He was Mr. Lower-Class

Pakistani Let's Be Communists. He didn't say very much. He'd stroke his beard and be very deep. And the Lenin glasses, let's not forget. He pulled her away from her friends. And she just changed. She forgot all about me. She grew her hair. She used to have such a bouncy gait, and bouncy hair and chatting for hours. My Daddy would say, "You were with her all day at school—what do you girls have to chat about?" She became completely quiet after she met him. Silent. She put her hair in a *piranda*. She gave up her jeans. She wore the poor-man's cotton. Weird slippers. She was just not herself anymore. The chattier he became, the quieter she grew. No more smiles. No more chatting. Silence. (*Harmonium silent.*)

He was like the snake. She was this innocent. He entrapped her. He wanted her money. Once they got married, he lorded over her family's servants, drove her family's cars. What happened to his communist manifesto? He was puffed up. He had scored a possession. They lived in her parents' fabulous house. She had a baby just after the marriage. She got depressed. He was never home, morning, noon, and night. She withdrew from the painting competition. In return she got his disappearing act. She went on medication. Her mother-in-law threw it down the toilet. (*In Urdu:*) Bas! Yeh ameeron ki beemari hey. She threw away her depression medication. She said, "This is a rich man's disease. Breast feed your baby. That's what you need." I got my scholarship to Tufts, took my harmonium and left the country. I was alone in my dorm when my mother called. "Beta, I have some bad news for you. I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but your best friend, Haji is dead." I'm like, what, what happened, did she get sick? "No, she wasn't sick, I'm sorry but, she shot herself in the head." (*Harmonium silent.*)

Her parents when I saw them when I went back said she looked so beautiful, the gunshot, the blood in her head, she had these purple eyelids.

It was her husband's birthday. She went downstairs. She knew Khala had a pistol. Haji went down, got the pistol out, called the servant, (*In Urdu*) Akbar, tum achey aadmi ho. "Akbar, you're a good soul. Can you do me a favor? In a few minutes, go upstairs and tell Sahib I have a surprise for him." And she pulled the trigger. Sufi found her in a pool of blood and fainted.

Fainted. Bloody son of a bitch. That's the story. That's how I lost my best friend. So I got the news that day. I had my harmonium. All I could do was sing. I prayed to a God I hadn't prayed to in years. (*Sings with harmonium.*)

## Scene Four: Butc/HER in Cairo

(*HER is laughing uncontrollably. Lights up.*)

S/HE: What the fuck are you laughing at? Here I've poured my heart out. Fuck you. This is my script.

HER: No. Nothing. Nothing. Fagetaboutit.

S/HE: Are you laughing at me?

HER: No. I'm sorry. I'm laughing at my Sufi days. Did I ever tell you about Abdul?

S/HE: Who the fuck is Abdul? (*HER hands her a wallet photo. Audio up: "Abdul Haleem."*) Oh my god is that you?

HER: Aiwa Habibi. Salaam waaleekum my femme, meet Abdul. Every woman in the Middle East needs a moustache.

S/HE: I'm intrigued in spite of myself. Quite handsome...

HER: What can I tell you? It was after my first cancer.

S/HE: You're not the only one in the room who had cancer, so don't make a virtue of it.

HER: It was before my second cancer. I knew nothing. You understand. I just got dropped off the moon. I knew nothing about nothing.

I had hardly ever been outside New York. So I went to Egypt. I was on a quest to find out why people kept getting schistosomiasis, when we had praziquantal with an 85 percent efficacy rate. What the fuck? I just got all the medicines I needed. What was goin' on? I didn't know what to bring. So I brought nothing.

All I knew is when I was a child I would stare at the mummies in the Natural History Museum. I wanted to grow up and be a mummy—the hieroglyphs, the colors, my arms folded over my own heart, stories of my kingdom on my crypt walls.

But I got one thing right. I walked off the street into a *parruchiere*, this Italian barber named Francesco—I handed him a Daily News cut-out



of Thurman Munson, the Yankee catcher, I pointed at Munson's signature moustache, and sat in his chair. "That's what I need." Francesco laughed, measured my mouth, gave me a haircut, and told me, "Come back in a week."

He fitted a custom moustache around the sides of my mouth. It felt like a caterpillar asleep on my lip. I lifted my lips this way and that, widening and feeling the pull of the skin. A moustache is about as comfortable as a bra. It tugs at your gender. I drank with it, kissed with it, talked with it, walked with it.

I took my penisdoll and went.

What! You don't have a penisdoll?

I went to the supermarket and my maleness went unquestioned over a stack of red peppers as I asked a woman the best way to pick peppers. It was harder, being Italian, to fake not knowing how to pick peppers, *papparule*, than it was acting manly.

With the moustache and penisdoll I could think better. Men left me alone.

When I got off the plane, I went and got men's clothes. I got a *galabeia*, a *kafeya*.

Men grunt. I listened to the way men grunted. You'd be surprised how long a man can get away in public with just grunting. Ah. Laaah. Ah. Aiwa.

I took the name Abdul. Sometimes in the Khan el Khalili I heard, "wallid walla bint"—"boy or girl?" Abdul sat in cafes with the men for a fenugreek tea and shisha pipe through hours of sweet honey tobacco and strong coffee sipped through a sugar cube held in my white front teeth. Abdul stayed at a certain level of high all day.

I talked with the fellahin standing in the canals of the Nile.

"Salaam waaleekum."

"Bilharzia like Abdul Haleem."

They'd lift their gaze toward the sky, "Ah Allah."

I went back to the Quran. I had to get a sense of Islam. Fellahin were in the canals for 100 reasons, but the biggest one was God. They didn't believe they'd get sick unless it was the will of God.

The mosques were fuckin' gorgeous. The *muezzin* calling from minarets and through the alleyways while you were sleeping—morning, afternoon, dusk, night. It drove me crazy, there were doors for women and doors for men. I wanted to go through all the doors.

Islam had to enter my cells.

I took my penisdoll and moustache. I entered through the powerful green door for Friday night *zbikr* at Al Ahzar, kicked off my sandals and panted the name of Allah for four hours. I prayed like a man. We bucked for four hours in recitation and finally Allah, Allah, Allah, Allah, Allah, Allah, Allah, Allah...

## Scene Five: Mullah

S/HE: You just wanted to feel men's cocks. Here, wear my husband's *kameez*. Stop with the laughter; this is serious. You are the mullah who came to my parent's house in GOR, Lahore, when I was six, to teach me to recite the Quran. That's the couch on which you sit, in my parent's living room. It's a winter afternoon, the Quran is open on the Queen Anne table in front of you, the green kerosene Aladdin heater is turned on to the left of the table, and as I enter the room, you pat the spot next to you on the sofa, and ask me to sit down next to you, after locking the door so we won't be disturbed in our spiritual lesson. Salaam alekum Maulvi Sahib.

HER: Wa lekum assalam, Beti. Come, sit here and recite as I taught you to last time, in the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind.

S/HE: Bismillah Rehman ur Rahim. (*Recites Quranic verse, sura Fateha in six-year-old's voice, then turns to HER*) C'mon do the mullah's part... You know I noticed him beginning to jerk off under his kameez...do it!

HER: That's blasphemous...i can't...i don't even know how a man jerks off...i'll come on my own (*starts smacking her cunt*).

S/HE: What? What are you saying? Oh god, oh god, this is disgusting...alaha allah, I have to run oh my god I am so scared you fuckin' butchy, stop, mullah stop...how will I make it

out of this room in one piece...i have to unlock the door, he makes a lunge for me...(HER lunges)...aaah...

(HER continues beating her cunt. S/HE runs to stage door.) I'm OUT!!!! I've escaped undefiled!

HER: (*Laughs loudly.*)

S/HE: Why are you laughing!?! I almost got raped as a six-year-old! This isn't funny.

HER: He wanted you to escape. He never wanted to rape you, he wanted you to recite. Like I want you to recite. That's a turn on. Spiritual sexual. It's not a rape story, beloved. (HER pats the chair again.) Come back here; just recite, lets start over...wa lekum asalam, beti.

S/HE: No Way! This is NOT my story!!

HER: It's like Rumi, amore mio, try to understand. "Body is not veiled from soul, nor soul from body, yet none is permitted to see the soul..."

"'Tis the fire of love that is in the read; 'tis the fervor of love that is in the wine."

It's like Rushdie, O Friend.

"What desires, what imperatives, are in the midnight air, he breathes them in; he can reach into the breasts of men and women, pick out the desires of their inmost hearts, and make them real. He is the quencher of desires, the slaker of lusts, the fulfiller of dreams...fire, falling fire, this is the judgment of god in his wrath...that men be granted their hearts desires, and that they be by them consumed."

S/HE: Oh Yes, I see...it's like *Hiroshima Mon Amour*!

HER: Yes.

BOTH: You destroy me, you are good for me.

HER: ..."the soul is a moaning dove that has lost its mate, a reed torn from the earth and made into a flute, a falcon summoned by a whistle to perch upon the falconer's wrist...it's because of love that all things travel toward the eternal, all things move toward the first beloved...make yourself free from self at one stroke...that you may see your own bright essence..."

S/HE: Stop, stop, stop!!! This is not my story... that is BS male crap, freeing yourself from yourself is the oldest masculine trope in the

world...for women, like us, you and me, S/HE and HER...yeah, just stop and think about it... what does it mean to free yourself from yourself...it means DEATH...I am so fed up with this obsession you Westerners have with Sufi BS shit...and that a-hole director of mine, who has still not shown up, fancies himself a Sufi like Rumi...he wanted my character in his stupid video to be free of herself...i.e., dead at the end...let's watch it and then we'll finish off this conversation.

## Scene Six: Smokescreen

(Video on: "Smokescreen." S/HE is being followed by a man all over Lahore; she sings like an actress in a Bollywood film, while writing a poem in other scenes. The man is following her to grab hold of her verses. In the end, he finds the poem in a room, and the final scene shows his body sprawled out on the floor, poem in hand. S/HE pulls the paper with the poem from his dead hands and walks away.)

S/HE: So you see, Rumi cannot tell my story. My story is men wanting to kill me off, after they've tried to seduce me, and get hold of my essence...

## Scene Seven: Whose Mecca?

HER: So can I feel your breast now?

S/HE: Sure. No not that one. Remember I had it chopped off. I can't feel anything there...

HER: OH; sorry; OK, how's this? Are you wet?

S/HE: I'm wet. In the head. The best place to be wet.

(They start walking off arm in arm.)

HER: Which way's Mecca?

S/HE: The coffee shop?

HER: No! Mecca Mecca!

S/HE: Let's see that's north, which way's east?

HER: Ninth Avenue is True North.

S/HE: It would be this way.

HER: How do you figure?

S/HE: You gotta face East—

HER: —through the Bronx

S/HE: Oh my God—through the Bronx as you say.

HER: That's if the world were flat. The curvature of the earth makes the shortest way to Mecca, I mean, if you skimmed the earth's curve, you'd have to go through New Jersey.

S/HE: That's just great, a fucking I-talian Butch and a Muslim YOU-KNOW-WHAT going off to do Hajj via New Jersey. Only you could think of that. Ahan an han an han...

HER: Yes, you can't pray through planets. Just like if we were on the moon, at a certain rotation, we'd have to build a new *Kabaa*. You gotta pray over the curvature of the earth's surface.

S/HE: You're serious. You've really thought this through, huh.

HER: Oh Madonna! We need a man to do Hajj! You think we can pull it off?

S/HE: You passed once. You'll pass again.

HER: Do they use iris-scanning identification now?

S/HE: Her and I are going off to do the Hajj.

END. LIGHTS OUT.