

TWO WIVES IN INDIA

by

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TWO WIVES IN INDIA - CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARY JO Fifties. Unpublished romance writer living in Oklahoma City. Stepmother to bride Emily. Oklahoma accent.

REBECCA “ BECCA” Fifties. Interior designer, living in New York. Mother of Emily, ex-wife of Sam.

SAM Fifties. Dead husband of Mary Jo and Becca.

JASKANVAR SINGH A Sikh, late twenties, born and raised in New Delhi, schooled in London and at Harvard. Engaged to Emily. Good looking, regal. Slight accent.

PIRI An Indian man. Ageless.
(Plays multiple roles including: Kuldip, Jaskanvar’s father, and The Stranger.)

MIRI An Indian woman. Ageless.
(Plays multiple roles including: Teertah, Jaskanvar’s mother.)

TIME: Very recently

PLACE: The play takes place over ten days in Northern India (Delhi, Chandigarh, and Agra).

SETTING: Soundscape and lights play important roles in creating different places both physically and emotionally. Miri and Piri should be used imaginatively to create the atmosphere and mystery of India.

Playwright’s Note: MIRI and PIRI are the names given by Guru Hargobind to his personal kirpans (two curved swords). They form part of the Sikh symbol The Khanda. The much of the poetry spoken is based on that of the Sikh Gurus.

MIRI and PIRI create the transformations occurring on stage.

ACT I

(Indian music plays. We see a silhouette of the Sikh symbol with Miri and Piri curved on either side of it. Piri and Miri peel away from the Sikh symbol.)

PIRI

Hello Miri.

MIRI

Hello Piri.

PIRI

My mind and body yearn,
my Lover is here yet far
away in foreign lands.

MIRI

The Beloved does not come home,
I am sighing to death,
and the lightning strikes fear in me.

(PIRI claps his hands. A spotlights comes up on Mary Jo, Becca and Jaskanvar.)

MARY JO

(She speaks to the audience.)

I never wanted to go to India. Ever. It has all that disease poverty and cows.

BECCA

When Emily called me and said “Mother, I’m going out with this amazing man named Jaskanvar.” I knew, as only a mother can know, that he was The One.

JASKANVAR

I never thought I’d marry.

MARY JO

But then my adorable step-daughter Emily got herself engaged to a man named Jaskanvar who’s a Sikh.

BECCA

And I was right. Six months later they got engaged.

JASKANVAR

I never thought I’d love someone enough to say, spend your life with me. But Emily is that person and I’m the luckiest man in the world.

BECCA

And now his family wants to give them an engagement party in Delhi India. Isn't that fabulous? You know I never imagined that daughter would marry an Indian. It just never crossed my mind. You know you imagine so many different things for your child but that was something that I just never imagined. Of course life is so ironic. Emily's father Sam wanted to go to India more than anything but I got pregnant with Emily and I refused to go. And now because of Emily I will go to India. Life, huh? You never know. You just never know.

MARY JO

You know I didn't even what a Sikh was. I had to look it up. Well I tell you what - they are a real interesting people. They are not Muslim, oh no. They broke away from Hindus and they believe we are all one under God. Isn't that nice? Of course I'm having trouble with God since Sam died. But then I'm having trouble with a lot of things – like what am I supposed to do with my life?

Oh well. Sikh and you shall find Mary Jo- “seek” and you shall find.

JASKANVAR

If only we didn't have parents to deal with. Mine are so stubborn. I didn't want this engagement party but they wouldn't listen. “The family must meet Emily, and Emily must meet the family. She must know your country.” I don't know if it is my country anymore. But they insist it is. And when I'm about to lose my mind, Emily reassures me, “When we see India together, it will be our country.” If only we were seeing India alone together.

(JASKANVAR enters and stands between the two women. They don't hear each other. MARY JO has a checklist.)

MARY JO

Now Jaskanvar what about the food? I don't want to get sick over there.

JASKANVAR

You won't. But don't eat anything from vendors on the streets.

MARY JO

I don't eat street food over here.

JASKANVAR

And stay away from meat for the first few days. Let your stomach adjust.

MARY JO

What kind of meat do you all have over there?

JASKANVAR

Chicken. Goat.

MARY JO

Goat?

JASKANVAR

Sometimes lamb. Although often what they call lamb is actually goat.

MARY JO

I never thought about eating goat.

JASKANVAR

And some people never thought about eating cow.

MARY JO

Oh, I forgot about the cow thing.

(Becca gets his attention. He turns to her.)

BECCA

Now Jaskanvar, we may have a little problem on our hands.

JASKANVAR

What problem?

BECCA

Mary Jo. Mary Jo may be a problem.

JASKANVAR

Really?

BECCA

As you know I don't see Mary Jo a lot of and haven't in a couple of years, and I don't know sort emotional shape she's in since – Sam's death

JASKANVAR

She's seems to be doing all right.

BECCA

Good, because in some previous circumstances she hasn't been "all right" especially around me.

JASKANVAR

I understand. I think.

BECCA

Between us I wish she weren't coming on this trip. It would be so much easier for everyone.

JASKANVAR

But Emily wants her to come.

BECCA

Emily always wants to make it right for everybody.

JASKANVAR

I know she does.

BECCA

And I want to make it right for Emily.

JASKANVAR

And so do I.

BECCA

Good. Then we understand each other.

(Mary Jo gets his attention.)

MARY JO

My friends who went to India said they got – “shit” sprayed all over their shoes - and then the people who sprayed it wanted money to clean their shoes –

JASKANVAR

I really don't know about the shit spraying.

(He turns quickly from one to the other.)

BECCA

Mary Jo needs handling.

MARY JO

I don't know what to do about that shit spraying.

JASKANVAR

We'll just have to keep our eyes open – and our feet moving.

BECCA

We'll handle Mary Jo together –

MARY JO

Because if it -

BECCA

- be on the same team.

MARY JO

- if it does happen –

BECCA

And make the trip work.

MARY JO

- it sure will make a big difference in what shoes I take.

(Jaskanvar breaks away from the two mothers.)

JASKANVAR

Too many mothers! My own mother is enough. Why must I have two more mothers? I don't want three mothers. But they look at me with hungry eyes and want something from me. Back, back you women with hungry eyes you will get nothing from me.

(PIRI claps his hands. Lights out on Jaskanvar.)

PIRI: Hello Miri.

MIRI: Hello Piri. Two Swords.

PIRI: One heart.

MIRI: Welcome to India.

(MIRI claps her hands. Noise of crowds, planes. The Delhi airport)

Piri and Miri dash about creating crowds in the airport.

Mary Jo enters clutching a big fancy purse and pulling a suitcase.)

MARY JO

Oh my god where is that Becca? What a nasty looking airport. Look at these wires hanging down. I'm going to be dead before I find her. Where am I supposed to go?

MIRI

Over here lady, over here, over here, over here.

(Becca enters from pulling her suitcase. The following exchange should overlap.)

BECCA

Over here. Mary Jo. Mary Jo. Hello. Hello over here.

MARY JO

Oh my god Becca- there you are.

(Beat as they take each other in)

BECCA

Lovely to see you.

MARY JO

And good to see you.

(Awkward hug)

BECCA

Don't you look like the traveller?

MARY JO

Oh look at your hair. It's darling.

BECCA

Thank you. So is yours – love that natural look. Now we need to keep moving -

MARY JO

I don't know if I can walk, I'm so tired - all those screaming babies in coach. I'll bet you didn't have those in First Class.

BECCA

No thank God. Now we've got to find where the drivers are.

MARY JO

And I just used one of those stand up toilets. Did you use one of those? I've never had to do that in my life. They better not have those in our hotel I can tell you that.

BECCA

Don't worry. We'll have western ones.

MARY JO

That's relief - because I don't think I could stand it. Ha ha. Get it?

BECCA

Yes. Cute. Look, there are the drivers. Now where's our driver? He should have a sign with our names on it.

MARY JO

Who can see anything...there's so many men waving signs...

BECCA

Jaskanvar promised there'd be a driver to meet us.

MARY JO

Why didn't Jaskanvar come himself?

BECCA

I don't know. But that's their business.

MARY JO

Oh wait there, there – I see Mary Jo, I see my name...I don't see your name -

BECCA

It's there – it's just all one word.

MARY JO (overlapping)

(She leaps and screams)

Hello, hello here ...Here I am, here I am.

(PIRI is the Driver. MIRI as another driver fights PIRI for the women's bags.)

DRIVER

MaryJobecca?

BECCA

Mary Jo and Becca. Two people.

MARY JO

Namaste, Namaste!

DRIVER

Namaste.

MARY JO

So glad I take Yoga.

BECCA

Me too.

MIRI

Lady give me your give me your bag..

DRIVER

Go away, she's mine, she's mine.

(to Mary Jo and Becca)

DRIVER

I get car. You wait here.

MARY JO

Don't leave us here.

BECCA

Yes. We'll wait here, right here. You come right back here.

*(Driver runs off. Horns honk. Sounds of Chaos surround Mary Jo and Becca..
Miri continues to circle them and push things in her face or grab her bag.)*

MIRI

Taxi over here over here... Give me your bag... give me your bag... give me your bag.

MARY JO

When the guidebooks said hold on to your bags I had no idea people would want them this bad.

BECCA

Don't pay any attention to them.

(Piri returns)

DRIVER

Give me bag. Give me bag.

MARY JO

No, no, no.

DRIVER

Give me bag.

MARY JO

No, no. I don't know you.

BECCA

He's our driver Mary Jo. Give him your bag.

MARY JO

You don't look like our driver.

DRIVER

I'm your driver. I drive Mary Jo and Becca.

(He grabs her bag.)

BECCA

Get in the car Mary Jo. He's our driver. It's okay.

(They get in the car.)

MARY JO

Well I could I tell he was our driver? Everybody looks the same.

BECCA

Sshsh. Don't talk like that.

(Big honking. Piri screams out the window)

DRIVER

Move that truck. Move that truck. Move it move it.

MARY JO

Oh my god he's driving on the wrong side of the road.

BECCA

They drive on the left side over here.

MARY JO

Oh I don't like that. I don't like that at all.

BECCA

You don't have to drive so forget about it. Focus on scenery.

MARY JO

What scenery? It's too smokey. Why is it so smokey?

BECCA

I don't know. Maybe pollution...

DRIVER

(Yelling)

Get that monkey out of that road!

MARY JO

Oh my God did you see that! Did he die?

BECCA

He's fine. He made it.

MARY JO

But we're gonna die.

BECCA

No we're not.

MARY JO

Yes we are. Look at how he's driving. Oh my God that was close.

BECCA

Don't look out there Mary Jo. Just look at me. Hello. Now tell me all about what you're up to, how's everything, your mother and Oklahoma City? How long have you been there now?

MARY JO

Less than a year. Since Sam died.

BECCA

Oh that's right.

(Beat)

So how is that - living back home? You're so great to be able to do that. I could never do it.

I mean I'd have to kill myself before I'd move back home with my mother.

MARY JO

I know the feeling. But I have to be there until I can get my feet on the ground.

DRIVER

(Yelling)

Ahre Sala!!! Ahre Sala!! (Hey Swine)

BECCA

I'm sure that will happen for you soon. A little bird told me you're writing a book.

MARY JO

I told Emily not to tell.

BECCA

Well you know she tells me everything.

MARY JO

How could I forget?

BECCA

Don't worry. Your secret is safe with me. Now what's your book about?

MARY JO

I can't tell you. It's bad luck. But I can tell you it's called "Love's Promise". I'm gonna write under the name of Delilah Love and "Love" will be in all the titles.

BECCA

Great idea! Good for you. Branding is so important. That's what I'm trying to do more of in my business.

(Big honking. Screech of brakes)

DRIVER

Move, move, move.

MARY JO

Oh my God what's happening? What are all these people doing?

BECCA

Beggars. They come around at stoplights. I read about it.

MARY JO

Look at this poor baby squished up against the glass. Don't do that. Don't do that to your baby.

BECCA

Don't look at her. Look at me. You know considering the economic climate, my business is doing really well. That's why I want to keep building on it you know through branding.

MARY JO

What's it called again?

BECCA

Becca Barstow Designs.

MARY JO

That man has no arms.

BECCA

Don't look. Anyway I've got a new website up with a lot of new sections and one in particular called "idees inspirees" where I post photos, observations, texts that inspire my work. It's a virtual scrapbook. I love it. I hope it will make clients realize that I do more than just solve decorating dilemmas. You've got to check it out. It's so great.

MARY JO

Well I will. I surely will. That's just great.

(Mutters to her purse)

It's always great. She's always great.

BECCA

Are you talking to your purse?

MARY JO

No I'm not talking to my purse.

BECCA

Okay. Whatever. You know Mary Jo this is strange thing that we are here together in India.

MARY JO

You're not kidding. My friends were appalled at the idea that I'd be traveling around India with you. They couldn't imagine it.

BECCA

Well, my friends reacted in a similar way. But hey what do they know? I believe that we can put aside our differences and work together to make this a really wonderful experience for Emily, Jaskanvar and his family.

MARY JO

Well I believe that too. We can certainly to our best to get a long.

BECCA

Yes we can. And it's very important for Emily that we make a good impression on Jaskanvar's family. Family is very important to these people.

MARY JO

I know that.

(To her purse)

She's think I don't know anything, how to behave, how to this...

BECCA

You ARE talking to your purse.

MARY JO

No I'm not.

BECCA

I saw you.

MARY JO

No you didn't.

BECCA

I have excellent eyesight and hearing. You were talking to your purse. Have you got a tape recorder in there?

MARY JO

No I don't.

BECCA

(Speaking to the purse)

Well if you do let me go on record that I don't intend to be material for your book.

MARY JO

Well since I write romantic fiction I doubt that you will be -unless of course, she's the villain.

BECCA

I heard that.

MARY JO

I know. I'm just joking with you.

BECCA

Fine. But I don't think it's the kind of joke we want to share in front of the family. Okay?

MARY JO

You don't get to tell me what to do.

BECCA

I'm not telling you what to do. I'm simply saying we both have to be more aware of what we say and do. I mean you can tell me if I'm doing something strange.

MARY JO

Believe me I will.

BECCA

Fine. The important thing is to be more aware and conscious of what we do since we're with these people all the time. I mean can you believe this schedule?

(Pulls it out of her purse)

MARY JO

What schedule? I didn't get a schedule. Why didn't I get a schedule?

BECCA

I don't know Mary Jo.

MARY JO

Probably because I'm just the step-mother-
(To her purse)

just the step-mother, the stupid step-mother.

BECCA

Stop talking to your purse!

MARY JO

I'm not talking to my purse. I'm talking to Sam.

BECCA

Are you "joking" with me again?

MARY JO

No I'm not joking. His ashes are in my purse.

BECCA

His ashes are in your purse?

MARY JO

Yes they're in my purse.

(She opens her purse and pulls out the canister)

DRIVER

Here we are. Here we are.

(Squeal of breaks)

BECCA

Jesus Christ! Are you insane?!

MARY JO

Don't talk to me like that.

BECCA

How could you? On this trip? With these people?

MARY JO

It's none of your business.

BECCA

It certainly is my business.

MARY JO

No it's not.

BECCA

How did you even get them on the plane?

MARY JO

THEY'RE NOT LIQUID.

DRIVER

Here we are!

(Becca and Mary Jo stumble from the cab. MIRI becomes Jaskanvar's mother Teertah)

TEERTAH

Welcome to India! I am Jaskanvar's mother Teertah.

MARY JO

Namaste, namsaste.

TEERTAH

You must be Emily's mother, Becca.

BECCA

No I'm Becca, Emily's MOTHER. This is Mary Jo, her stepmother.

TEERTAH

How lovely to meet you both.

BECCA

And we are so glad to finally meet you.

MARY JO

It's so kind of you to wait up for us this late.

BECCA

Yes. Thank you so much.

TEERTAH

Of course it is my pleasure. Did you have a good trip?

BECCA

Yes. Wonderful.

MARY JO

(Overlap with Becca)

No. Too long.