

# The Way

by

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## DESCRIPTION

Aviva Matthews is a very popular girl in school. She has everything going for her and is at the top. But one day she tries to break up a fight at school between a girl and her friend Ruby, and the incident affects her deeply. Studying Lao-Tzu's "The Way" in her World Religions class, she decides to use the power of meditation to end the violence that happens to children and that children do to each other, and she goes to her bedroom for a retreat. This leads to a confrontation with her friend Dink, who believes the whole adult world (which to her is the cause of all the violence) should be wiped clean so that things can be done over, and done right. They realize that both approaches are needed: confronting injustice must be balanced with the search for peace and harmony. Spiritual power comes only when it engages with history, and violence can only be met with love and risk and courage.

## CHARACTERS

- AVIVA MATTHEWS, *teenager*
- T.J. BOYLE, *teacher*
- DINK, the punk anarchist
- RUBY, PEARL, YASMIN, classmates of AVIVA and DINK; they act as a sort of narrator
- THE FIGHTER, a *girl*
- Various students in a variety of roles, especially as the CROWD (which also functions as a Greek chorus), often referred to as PERSON in the script. **NOTE:** When PERSON is used, it does not mean the same person, only that the lines should be parceled out to different individual actors.

*The Voices of the Children* -- they will appear in AVIVA's "vision" -- except for FATIMA, the other children can be male or female -- just use the appropriate name.

- Ringyat/Jaleel -- child prostitute (female/male)
- Maria/Pedro -- daughter/son of someone "disappeared" (female/male)
- Marta/Jaime -- victim of a bombing (female/male)
- Becka Raven/William Raven -- *Native American* (female/male)
- Fatima -- young girl to under female genital mutilation
- Alem/Haile -- young soldier (female/male)

- Cassie/Charles -- killed in a school shoot-out (female/male)

**SETTING/TIME:** The school; Aviva's room -- the present

**MISCELLANEOUS:** 1) Musical choices are up to the director; 2) parts that require group work should be as choreographed as possible so that the movement looks tight; 3) ethnicities can and should be as mixed as warranted.

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### PROLOGUE

This is a visual scene, a dumbshow. AVIVA is seated on her meditation cushion. She is strongly backlit, so that the audience can only see her silhouette. Music underscores the scene, building in volume, until it crescendos. There is a bright burst of light to coincide with the crescendo of the music, and the stage goes to darkness.

If there is a way to make AVIVA appear to levitate without revealing any of the machinery to do it, all the better.

Music comes up again, and RUBY, YASMIN, and PEARL appear. As RUBY begins to speak, the backlit silhouette of AVIVA comes up slowly.

RUBY

Something strange has happened. / No one knows if  
it's bad or good. / Something strange is  
happening / Right in this neighborhood.

YASMIN

Aviva Matthews is sitting / Alone in a single  
room / She doesn't speak to anyone / Just sits  
with her pain and gloom

The backlight goes out on the silhouette; AVIVA exits.

PEARL

Every adult has asked her / But no one knows her  
"why" or "how" / Aviva is on a journey / How it  
ends -- how it began -- starts right now

\* \* \* \* \*

### Scene 1

Lights come up bright, and AVIVA appears, surrounded by RUBY, PEARL, YASMIN and others as they walk through the hall in school, bookbags, etc. Other people on stage for crowd. She waves to people, big smile, etc. as if she were the queen moving through the commoners. DINK is obvious in the crowd, and she always hovers on the edge of AVIVA's light.

RUBY

It begins right here: Aviva is a very popular girl. Everyone loves Aviva.

PERSON 1

Isn't she just da bomb, man?

PERSON 2

Killer.

PERSON 3

Pretty.

PERSON 4

Fly.

RUBY

Teachers love her, too.

A crowd of "teachers" -- that is, actors dressed as teachers -- come out, gradebooks in their hands, and they hand her signs with "A" and "A+" written on them.

PEARL

The A's piled up and up and up --

The teachers leave, replaced by "coaches" -- that is, actors dressed as coaches -- with trophies.

YASMIN

Top-notch in sports.

They give her the trophies, which she hands off to the CROWD. As PEARL speaks, AVIVA mimes what he says.

PEARL

Extra-curricular -- whew! Drama club.

(AVIVA mimes acting)

Chorus.

(AVIVA mimes singing)

Yearbook and newspaper.

(AVIVA mimes phone calls, handing out papers)

Church.

(AVIVA mimes praying)

Yes, the queen.

Again waves like the queen to the multitudes; someone comes up behind her and puts on a tiara.

PEARL

And social conscience.

As PEARL talks, an actor comes out with hands manacled with papier-mache handcuffs; AVIVA touches them with the tiara and the actor breaks them apart, freed. Velcro could also be used.

PEARL

Student president of the regional chapter of Amnesty International. Her parents were very proud.

Two actors comes out holding up photos of two adults over their faces -- the photos should show the adults looking somewhat intimidated under the bright lights. An alternate to the photos would be sock puppets or half-masks for the parents.

YASMIN

All in all, Aviva's life was phat, sweet, and tight.

Everyone gathers into a family tableau, and a light goes off like a family portrait being taken. A momentary shuffle, then a second picture. Then the actors exit, leaving only AVIVA and her "parents" - the two actors with the photos, sock puppets, or half-masks -- as well as RUBY, YASMIN, and PEARL on stage. The "parents" and AVIVA sit on folding chairs.

RUBY

Of course, into every life a little rain must fall.

FATHER

We don't think it's safe.

AVIVA

It's just a trip to New York!

MOTHER

We don't think you're old enough.

AVIVA

I'm fourteen.

FATHER

It's a dangerous place!

AVIVA

Oh, right!

RUBY

The concerned parents.

They stand; RUBY, YASMIN, and PEARL move the actors' chairs to a different part of the stage. A little musical bridge.

ALEXA  
You can't blame us for being aware!

MOTHER  
That was in Colorado!

ALEXA  
It can happen anyw --

MOTHER  
Those kids were wacko!

FATHER  
We want to know who your friends are -- you can't  
trust anyone these days.

MOTHER  
All the guns --

AVIVA  
Just nutsos, that what they were -- out in  
Columbine --

MOTHER  
Nutsos with guns --

AVIVA  
-- or all those others.

(to ALEXA)  
I don't hang around with nutsos.

FATHER  
How do you know?

PEARL  
As much as she hated it, Aviva had to admit she  
was stumped.

RUBY, YASMIN, and PEARL pick up the actors' chairs and move to another  
part of the stage. A little musical bridge.

MOTHER  
Did you read about --

AVIVA  
Yes, I did.

MOTHER  
Just awful.

AVIVA  
It's not like that would happen around here.

FATHER

Those boys killing their parents -- terrible --

AVIVA

Some parents are.

FATHER

Oh, really?

Beat as AVIVA sees their faces.

AVIVA

Present company excluded, you know.

The "parents" exit, taking the chairs.

AVIVA

Mom!

(no answer)

Dad!

(no answer)

Damn!

YASMIN

And as if it weren't bad enough having interfering parents who really loved her and a very nasty-tasting foot stuck in her mouth, there was Dink -- her oldest and most annoying friend - - who just wouldn't leave Aviva alone.

DINK enters, dressed punk. She hands AVIVA a bookbag, which AVIVA slings over her shoulder. RUBY, PEARL, and YASMIN now become fellow students.

DINK

So what are you wearing today?

AVIVA

Not the floor of my closet.

DINK

Ha, ha, ha. At least I am not the over-dressed bourgeois slave of starved magazine models.

AVIVA

Uh-oh, punk girl's learned a new word.

RUBY

You have an attitude.

YASMIN

An acid attitude.

DINK

All those pictures of dry bones and sick dreams.

PEARL

You're just jealous --

DINK

I don't want to be Barbie-cued --

AVIVA

So sassy a lassy --

DINK

Anorectic zombies with maxed-out credit cards --

AVIVA

I like you, Dink, but sometimes it's really hard to like you.

RUBY, YASMIN, AND PEARL

Agreed.

DINK

Been that way since kindergarten, so let's all deal with it.

PEARL

She loves being the rebel

DINK

(reviews their clothing)

Let's see: cute skirt, got the right bagginess, thirty-dollar sweater, hair just so --

YASMIN

I don't use a blender to cut mine.

DINK

I use an electric carving knife -- another one of my parents' useless capitalist gizmos -- so don't go all high and mighty on me. All this, and there's kids starving right here in our little town. Do you know how many --

AVIVA

Yes, I do know, you wasp!

DINK

I'm wounded!

PEARL

Buzz, buzz, buzz!

DINK  
Sting!

PEARL  
Get off me!

RUBY  
Back off! We do know --

DINK  
Yeah?

AVIVA  
From doing that community service requirement --

DINK  
Big whoop!

AVIVA  
-- we all had to do. So we know!

DINK  
You know not much worth knowing. Aviva Beeba,  
and you, the back-up band, you're just so --  
locked in, you know. I am your conscience, I am  
going to unlock your soul --

YASMIN  
She's summoning the sermon.

AVIVA  
Unlock it from what?

DINK  
From this society --

AVIVA  
When's the last time you cleaned your ears?

DINK  
My ears are fine --

AVIVA  
We don't need salvation, thank you.

DINK  
You don't need? Hah!

YASMIN  
She's warming up!

DINK

This society buys your soul -- yes, even yours! -  
- and cuts it into bite-sized pieces and sells  
'em back to you and you end up eating your own  
self to death.

RUBY

Gross --

DINK

To death. Like that Faustus guy we read about --

AVIVA

Well, thanks, Dink, now that you've ruined our  
appetite and our entire day --

DINK

You need it. Not as much as I do, of course.  
But you need it. All God's chillun need it.

PEARL

Go do your revolution somewhere else.

DINK

I'm going to have it right here with you.

AVIVA

You annoy me.

DINK

I like you, too.

AVIVA

I like you, too. Do we like her?

RUBY, YASMIN, AND PEARL

We like her.

AVIVA

But you annoy me.

RUBY, YASMIN, AND PEARL

You annoy us, too.

DINK

(skipping offstage)

Little girls, sweet and hot / Look at everything  
you've got --

(DINK turns and faces AVIVA)

What you really do not know / Is just how fast it  
all can go.

(snaps her fingers)

Ta-ta, luv.

DINK continues skipping offstage but is stopped by the class bell ringing. BOYLE comes on wearing a bookbag and with two folding chairs, which he sets up. The rest of the CROWD enters; each brings in a folding chair and sits as well as three chairs for RUBY, YASMIN, and PEARL. Just as the bell stops ringing, AVIVA slips into one as if she's just making to class before the bell rings. Right next to her is DINK. AVIVA takes a notebook out of her bookbag, and gets ready to take notes.

BOYLE

(to AVIVA and DINK)

Glad you could all make it.

DINK

That's what they created the last minute for.

BOYLE

Well, now that we have the yin

(indicating AVIVA)

-- and the yang --

(indicating DINK)

-- with us, let's have the Honors class pick up from yesterday. Our forward march through the religions of the world. If this is Tuesday --

DINK

It must be Buddha.

(DINK taps AVIVA)

Buddha's cool.

BOYLE

Nope, today is Lao-Tzu -- man of shadows.

AVIVA begins writing.

BOYLE

No, you don't have to write that down -- "man of shadows" is not going to be an answer on the test. Just a little dramatic opening.

AVIVA

I just wanted to --

BOYLE

(to the class)

I say "man of shadows" because no one really knows if he existed or if he wrote the book everyone says he wrote, the Tao -- T-A-O -- (that's "dow," not "tay-oh") -- the Tao Te Ching. Roughly translated, "The Way."

AVIVA surreptitiously picks up her pen and begins to write. BOYLE catches her.

BOYLE

No pens.

DINK

So he didn't exist?

BOYLE

There's no record.

DINK

So a ghost wrote the book?

BOYLE

Somebody wrote the book, and we've named him Lao-Tzu. None of that really matters. What matters is the book.

DINK

So, do we get this book?

BOYLE

You already have it.

DINK

No, I don't.

BOYLE

That's the kind of thing Lao-Tzu would say to people.

DINK

Then he was whacked.

BOYLE

See what he was getting at. "The Way," the book, is about how to live your life when you're in the Tao -- which, Lao-Tzu would say, is silly because we know everything we need to know to live a good life -- we're born with it -- but we screw it up with a life full of illusions and betrayals.

DINK  
(to AVIVA)

Ha! Told you.

AVIVA  
The Tao?

BOYLE  
The Tao.

AVIVA  
Is what?

Lights change. Flute music comes up. The actors turn their chairs to face the audience full and sit still. The lighting should be such that individual faces are illuminated, so that the audience has the feel of faces floating in a primeval darkness. If possible, they should also be at different levels. BOYLE sits with them.

BOYLE  
The Tao. Lao-Tzu. Yin. Yang. What does all this strange language mean? Close your eyes and just breathe. The Tao. The Tao is this energy that is everything -- no beginning or end, just is.

DINK  
It creates life as naturally as the ocean creates waves, and if you let the Tao flow through you, your life will follow the way of the Tao --

BOYLE  
No illusions, no hungers for power, no exhaustion from always trying to find that thing, that thing --

AVIVA  
That CD, that car, that gun, that love, that job, that ego -- that will make all your life have meaning.

RUBY  
It is about letting go and going back --

PEARL  
To the universe that gave you life in the first place --

YASMIN  
It is about peace and an end to suffering.

ALL  
An end to suffering.

AVIVA

We can hear our breath like we've never heard it before -- as loud as a train in our ears.

DINK

We can hear our blood pound through our veins.

BOYLE

But most important of all. We don't need to feel afraid.

ALL

We do not need to feel afraid.

BOYLE

For a moment. A half-moment --

ALL

We do not need to feel afraid.

BOYLE

A moment warm, bright -- an atomic click of atoms, then gone.

AVIVA

But we felt it. And it felt good.

ALL

It felt very, very good.

AVIVA

Not to be afraid.

DINK

Not to be afraid.

Lights bump to bright white, school bell rings, and the world is suddenly choreographed chaos as the crowd surges to the next class, the next entertainment, and so on. This is also how the chairs get moved off. Music, laughter, etc. Ad lib lines in the crowd; BOYLE shouts, "Read the first ten sections!"

All of a sudden the chaos stops, and everyone faces the audience directly, picking out an audience member to look at. Flute music up.

BOYLE

A moment warm --

PERSON

Warm.

BOYLE

Bright --

PERSON  
Warm --

PERSON  
Bright --

BOYLE  
An atomic click of atoms.

PERSON  
Then gone.

AVIVA  
But they felt it --

DINK  
They felt it --

RUBY  
And it felt --

YASMIN  
Very --

PEARL  
Very --

HALF OF CROWD  
Very --

ALL  
Good.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Scene 2

A recreation of the opening tableau of Scene 1: AVIVA, the popular girl, surrounded by the hordes. BOYLE exits.

RUBY  
But these things don't last for long.

PEARL  
And the life of the teenager comes roaring back.

YASMIN  
With a vengeance.

From offstage the audience hears a voice in a rage. Everyone on stage tries to hold their bright smiles, but it's clear that it's a strain for them -- suddenly, everything is not all sweetness and light. The FIGHTER enters.

FIGHTER  
(from offstage)  
I am not going to take this! Kicking me out of  
school -- nah-uh!

(comes on stage)  
Where is she?  
(sees RUBY)  
You!

RUBY  
Out of my face, loser.

FIGHTER  
You got me kicked out.

RUBY  
You got yourself kicked out.

FIGHTER  
You ratted me out.

RUBY  
Look, you got yourself bounced --

FIGHTER  
(to everyone)  
She flipped on me --

RUBY  
-- waving that thing around --

FIGHTER  
A comb --

RUBY  
I wasn't gonna lie!

YASMIN  
Take a walk, will you?

FIGHTER  
(to YASMIN)  
You, cheesehead, shut up! Ain't your business.

RUBY  
(to YASMIN)  
Watch it -- you might get spit on with rabies.

FIGHTER  
It was a comb -- You know what they did to me  
for a comb?

FIGHTER walks up and down the ranks of the people in the tableau, berating them. They don't move, but they are clearly scared a bit.

FIGHTER

Do you know what those fatheads in the office did to me? They threw me out -- for what? For Zero Tolerance!

RUBY

Fool gets what a fool deserves.

AVIVA

What happened?

FIGHTER

And who are you?

YASMIN

(to AVIVA)

Watch it -- you might get spit on with rabies.

FIGHTER

I know you -- you're that Wendy who does the prisoner thing --

PEARL

Uh-oh -- in her sights --

FIGHTER

(Dragging out the phrase)

Amnesty International. Well, I just got shagged with injustice!

RUBY

Man, you are so full of gas --

AVIVA

I don't know --

FIGHTER

They kicked me out.

AVIVA

Good reason, maybe --

RUBY

You had a comb --

(to everyone)

-- she had a comb that looked like a switchblade knife! What were you thinking, girl? They asked me if you did. I wasn't gonna lie for you!

AVIVA

You're the one --

FIGHTER

Hey, white bread, not talking to you anymore!

DINK

(to FIGHTER)

You might just want to shut up.

FIGHTER

Shut up, punk star.

RUBY

What are you doing here? You're supposed to be off school grounds --

FIGHTER

What do you think I'm here for? What - do - you - think?

AVIVA

Look, we can work this out --

DINK

(to AVIVA)

Don't play the United Nations here --

FIGHTER

You're just a poser --

AVIVA

We can talk --

FIGHTER

A fake --

RUBY

You're wigged -- out of my face.

FIGHTER

Like all of 'em.

AVIVA

Ruby, let's talk --

FIGHTER

In your face full-time --

RUBY

Move!

FIGHTER

Naw, naw, naw -- right here, right now.

AVIVA  
C'mon!

YASMIN  
Clear the stage, freak, -- you ain't touching --

AVIVA  
Yasmin, stop it!

FIGHTER  
Right now --

PEARL  
Ruby, let's go --

FIGHTER  
You can't do this to me!

RUBY  
I'm not going there --

FIGHTER  
You skanked six months of my life --

PEARL  
Bad dice, honey.

AVIVA  
Pearl --

FIGHTER  
A bogus call -- zee-ro tolerance for me! Me! If  
any one of her friends --  
(indicating AVIVA)  
-- got nailed, you think the principal'd toss  
them? Think he'd chuck Little Miss I-Hate-  
Injustice. Nooo! Payment is due --

RUBY  
You did it to yourself! Fly away, witch!

The next sequence must be well-choreographed: it is a series of 10 "slides." Each "slide" shows a snapshot of the fight. The first is the opening position of RUBY and FIGHTER; the last shows AVIVA on the ground. In between, the director can arrange the remaining 8 slides to tell the story that AVIVA tried to intervene and was knocked to the ground; the director is also free to use DINK and any other character in the sequences. Each "slide" is a tableau, a statue of sorts. The CROWD will clap for each slide, as if it were the flash of a strobe -- using a strobe would be nice, too, if possible. The whole sequence should be seen as a dance. Final tableau: AVIVA is on the ground; FIGHTER has exited. BOYLE comes on.

BOYLE

What's going on here?

CROWD pulls back. BOYLE comes over, and with the help of DINK and RUBY, lifts AVIVA up.

BOYLE

What happened?

But AVIVA is too frightened to speak.

BOYLE

(to CROWD)

What happened here?

In three groups: Group 1 puts its hands over its eyes.

CROWD

We saw nothing.

(Group 2 puts its hands over its ears)

We heard nothing.

Group 3 simply puts its hands over its mouth.

BOYLE

You're Aviva's friends, right?

Everybody puts a hand over the mouth of a neighbor.

BOYLE

(to AVIVA)

Let's go. Let's go to the principal's office.

BOYLE leads AVIVA offstage. Everyone in the CROWD except DINK, RUBY, PEARL, and YASMIN does a half-turn to face upstage in four beats, clapping out this rhythm four times: clap, clap, slap the thighs, similar to the opening of the percussive section of Queen's "We Will Rock You." On the last beat, CROWD will be facing upstage with its back to the audience and the lights will bump down. CROWD exits.

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### Scene 3

Music -- director's choice. Lights on RUBY, YASMIN, PEARL, and DINK.

PEARL

Never saw anything like it.

RUBY

She shouldn't have stuck her face in.

DINK

She was doing it for you.

RUBY

I can take care of myself!

DINK

Isn't it nice to know that somebody else wanted to do it for you?

YASMIN

I hope she's all right.

DINK

Isn't it nice to know that somebody would take pain for you?

RUBY

She wasn't taking any pain for me. She was just doing that -- Amnesty International thing.

PEARL

(to RUBY)

Why is it so hard for you to say thanks? The girl is --

RUBY

I can fight my own battles!

PEARL

(to YASMIN)

The amazon warrior.

RUBY

Shut that mouth of yours!

DINK

Oh, so now you are gonna do the fighter thing, is that it?

(to the others)

She's going to turn out no better.

RUBY

Your mouth is bigger than your brain.

DINK

I think you don't like to say "thank you" -- that's cool, just don't make Aviva pay for it. She saved your behind -- the least you can do if you can't say thanks is say nothing, and don't go doing all these tough-chick poses -- they're ugly on you.

YASMIN

I think, Ruby darlin', that she has your number on this.

RUBY

I was scared, all right!

YASMIN

Who wasn't?

RUBY

I didn't know what she was packing.

PEARL

An evil heart.

DINK

Naw -- she was as scared as us.

PEARL

Still evil.

DINK

That's what fear does to a body -- makes it mean.

PEARL

Meanness is evil.

YASMIN

Agreed.

RUBY

When I saw her there, I knew why -- my price for telling the truth!

DINK

Always a price for the truth.

RUBY

And I wanted to walk away, you know -- just flip my behind around, give her the hand, and sail on out of there. Not worth my time.

YASMIN

So why didn't you?

DINK

It kicked in, didn't it?

PEARL

What?

DINK

The volcano.

RUBY

Her face in my face -- like a switch. I wasn't going to take the disrespect, I was going to rearrange her life.

DINK

Explode.

RUBY

I felt the fire right here --

(indicates her heart)

-- and it was like I lost my brain. The thinking part -- walk away. The volcano part -- slam!

PEARL

Meanness is evil.

YASMIN

And so how's it gonna stop? Aviva got decked for trying. She couldn't stop it. So who? So how?

DINK

I don't know.

RUBY

Me neither.

YASMIN

Count us in on that.

PEARL

It's gonna take a long time for peace to come around.

DINK

If ever. Volcanoes can last a long, long time.

RUBY

And they burn really, really hot.

Musical bridge -- director's choice. Lights fade down slowly to black.

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#### Scene 4

Lights up on AVIVA, seated center stage. Her eyes are closed, as if she is asleep. Music changes to something more meditative, but there is also an edge underneath it. Behind AVIVA enter the VOICES OF THE CHILDREN. The director is free to arrange and light them as needed, but the effect should be as otherworldly as possible: these are visions

within AVIVA's dream. NOTE: See the note for the Voices under "Characters" and substitute accordingly.

The VOICES begin to whisper AVIVA's name softly.

VOICES

Aviva, Aviva, Aviva --

AVIVA stirs but does not open her eyes.

RINGYAT

We are the world.

MARIA

We are the children.

AVIVA

No --

MARTA

My name is Marta.

AVIVA

Marta.

MARTA

You cannot see it, but I have lost an arm. An eye. Victim of a bomb planted in the ground like a poisoned fruit. I was gathering wood -- I lost my soul.

BECKA RAVEN

I am Becka Raven.

AVIVA

Becka.

BECKA RAVEN

On the reservation I watch the young men burn with alcohol, and at night I hear the sad stories of how my ancestors have been slaughtered.

FATIMA

My parents named me Fatima --

AVIVA

Fatima.

FATIMA

-- because I was such a miracle in their lives. But now they want to cut me, mutilate me, take my private parts and throw them away.

KIDYANE

Yo! I am Kidyane!

AVIVA

Kidyane.

KIDYANE

In the wars between the clans they gave me, Kidyane, a gun bigger than I was tall. I remember the first man I killed. I cried. I remember my second. I did not cry.

CASSIE

Cassie, for Cassandra.

AVIVA

Cassie.

CASSIE

I crouched behind the library table, but I knew he was going to kill me. And when he did, I felt the peace of God enter my soul. But I still do not understand why.

RINGYAT

Ringyat -- my name has the voice of bells.

AVIVA

Ringyat.

RINGYAT

Where I live, the men come in buses to my neighborhood. Money changes hands, and I go with one of them, two of them -- it doesn't matter. I earn money for my family, that is all. I think of the sea when I feel their weight.

MARIA (PEDRO)

Maria, namesake of the Virgin Mary. (Pedro, namesake of the apostle)

AVIVA

Maria/Pedro.

MARIA

For more hours a day than I sleep I sew labels onto clothes I will never wear, tie laces on sneakers my feet will never know. Somewhere the owner lives in a big house; somewhere, someone dies for the sneakers I make.

At this point, the director can have the VOICES move around AVIVA, if appropriate.

RINGYAT  
So much violence, Aviva.

MARTA  
Done to us --

CASSIE  
Done against us --

MARIA  
We are burned like wood in a stove --

BECKA RAVEN  
Our hearts are stolen --

FATIMA  
Our minds drowned in pain --

KIDYANE  
Our bodies turned into weapons --

MARIA  
Our blood is put into a bank account --

BECKA RAVEN  
Adults violate us.

CASSIE  
Our own friends violate us.

MARTA  
We do it to each other.

RINGYAT  
And the world makes a killing from our sadness  
every day.

The VOICES repeat the following phrase, one after the other,  
overlapping: "And what will Aviva do?" The order of the VOICES is not  
important.

AVIVA  
Help me.

The VOICES begin to move upstage, out of the light.

AVIVA  
Help me! Give me an answer!

They are now upstage.

AVIVA  
What am I supposed to do?

In one coordinated movement, the VOICES clap, and AVIVA pops her eyes open. As the lights fade to black, the audience sees AVIVA anguished and uncertain.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Scene 5

The sound of a gong. Lights change into BOYLE's class, a duplicate of the action in Scene 1 except that there are no chairs this time -- people are sitting, sprawled out, etc. on the ground. BOYLE enters. Everyone now knows what happened to AVIVA. The lines said by PERSON can be assigned to different people in the CROWD.

BOYLE

All right, just because it's springtime and we have a class outside doesn't mean the minds of the honors class have to turn to mush.

PERSON 1

C'mon, Mr. B. -- I have a song in my heart!

BOYLE

And what song would that be, Mr. Young?

PERSON 1

Answer can be any song the audience would know -- try for a funny or ironic answer.

BOYLE

I'll put it on my list.

PERSON 2

You have a long list.

BOYLE

I'm going to have a long life, so, no problem.

PERSON 2

How do you know that?

BOYLE

I don't "know" it -- I guess it's just about attitude.

Underneath, sotto voce, as BOYLE speaks.

PERSON 1

'Tude

PERSON 2

Dude

PERSON 3  
You're so rude

PERSON 2  
Get me a lawyer

PERSON 3  
So you be sued.

BOYLE  
Mind can shape --

AVIVA  
Is that true?

BOYLE  
What, Aviva? People, keep it down!

PERSONS stop.

BOYLE  
I didn't hear you, Aviva.

AVIVA is suddenly aware of how quiet it is and how people are watching her.

AVIVA  
Is that true?

BOYLE  
About attitude?

AVIVA  
Yes.

BOYLE  
I just know it works.

AVIVA  
Works.

BOYLE  
The Taoists --  
(to the rest)  
-- listen up, this'll be part of your final  
portfolio -- all the Taoists and Buddhists and  
Zen-ists and whatnot have one common, enduring  
belief. Anyone remember it?

PERSON 4  
To end suffering in life, end desire.

BOYLE  
Very good.

PERSON 4

Yeah, I memorized it -- but I have no idea what it means.

BOYLE

And why should you?

PERSON 3

You mean it's okay he's a stump?

Laughter.

BOYLE

Hold it in for a minute. No, it's understandable. You all live in a culture that depends upon you -- you and you and you and me, too -- having endless desires: for sneakers, for fast food --

PERSON 4

For sex --

BOYLE

Goes without saying. Even though you just said it.

PERSON 4

Sex, sex, sex --

BOYLE

Enough. But is everyone really happier? Eh? Would you say that the people around you are happy in that deep-down way Lao-Tzu was getting at in his book? Yes? No?

PERSON 1

I'm happy.

BOYLE

Oh, I know you are -- But do any of you ever feel something isn't complete, something that can't be fed by credit cards?

PERSON 2

(suddenly shy)

I don't know --

BOYLE

Anyone?

Silence.

BOYLE

Well, tough question to answer. See, Lao-Tzu was asking the same question --

PERSON 3

You mean they had credit cards then?

Everyone laughs.

BOYLE

Only he came up with a completely different answer from what we have come up with, with our credit cards, which is what makes it hard to grab. But Lao-Tzu saw the price. The price. And the price is?

AVIVA

Suffering.

BOYLE

Yes. Suffering.

(points to PERSON 4)

From --

PERSON 4

Desire?

BOYLE

Get it? From desires with an endless appetite that get violent when they can't get enough. Now, some people stop right there with that thought -- life is stupid, ain't anything to do about it, blah blah blah. Lao-Tzu would have slapped them, because there is something you can do.

Points to PERSON 4 again.

PERSON 4

To end suffering, end desire.

BOYLE

And how do you do that? C'mon, I know you all know this.

PERSON 1

Meditation.

BOYLE

Clearing the mind --

PERSON 2

Them that has a mind.

BOYLE

And some think that clearing the mind can change the world, the way if a butterfly moves its wing in Asia -- remember we talked about that? -- it can change everything.

PERSON 1

Yeah, but --

BOYLE

But what?

PERSON 1

Can it?

BOYLE

I don't know. Some people say, that's all I know. Testing it is up to you. It can't hurt.

PERSON 3

(trying to sit in a lotus position)  
Look at me, I'm the Buddha.

PERSON 4

You just a rude Buddha.

PERSON 2

Dude.

BOYLE

Okay, folks, we got a few minutes left and the sun is shining and we're sitting under an oak tree older than all of us, in the shade of the Tao, so to speak, so let's try a little Lao-Tzu again.

BOYLE, CROWD, and AVIVA sit in a meditation position, and it should be staged so that AVIVA is seated in the same place the audience sees her in the Prologue. Music begins as lights come down. BOYLE looks over at AVIVA with concern as the lights go to black.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Scene 6

CROWD exits; AVIVA remains, and she is backlit as seen in the Prologue.

RUBY

Aviva Matthews is sitting / Alone in a single room

YASMIN

Aviva?

PEARL

She doesn't speak to anyone / Just sits in her  
silent gloom

RUBY

Aviva?

YASMIN

She is trying to end the suffering / To heal what  
has been burned

PEARL

Aviva?

DINK

She will not talk to anyone / Until all the evil  
has been turned

Backlighting out. PEARL, YASMIN, RUBY, and DINK stand outside what  
would be AVIVA's bedroom door.

PEARL

Her parents said they can't get her to answer.

RUBY

Yeah?

PEARL

She's been up here three days now.

RUBY

No food --

PEARL

Yeah.

YASMIN

No water --

RUBY

Yeah.

PEARL

She disconnected her phone --

RUBY

I'm scared.

YASMIN

We could break the door down.

PEARL

I don't think that's a good idea.

YASMIN

Well, do you have any better ideas?

PEARL

No.

YASMIN

(to DINK)

Do you?

DINK

If we don't do something, they're going to come and take her away.

PEARL

I know.

DINK

The school will file a petition -- her parents are going to be in some deep sheep dip when that happens -- and some shrink somewhere is going to get the nanoprobes in and delete her brain.

RUBY

A little strong, don't you think?

DINK

We're under the legal limit of eighteen -- they can do anything they want to us.

YASMIN

So what are we going to do, hey?

DINK

It's up to me.

RUBY

Yeah? Why not me?

DINK

I've been busting her chops longer than any of you.

RUBY

But she went down for me.

DINK

I know that -- so consider me your ambassador. Trust?

RUBY

Trust. Besides, to be honest -- I have a hard time talking myself out of bed in the morning. You got the quicker lip -- you know that.

DINK

(to the others)

Fine with you?

They agree with a handshake they make up.

DINK

All right -- so let me work some magic.

PEARL, YASMIN, and RUBY exit, with some humorous gestures of encouragement. DINK hesitates.

DINK

(to herself)

Yeah, right.

(gets herself ready to speak)

Aviva?

No response.

DINK

Aviva -- it's me. Me, Dink.

No response.

DINK

Can I come in?

No response, but as DINK talks, AVIVA will stand and walk slowly to where the door of her room would be.

DINK

All right, I'll stand here. I like it out here in the hallway, talking to a door. I just want to know if you need some help. If I can help. At all. I think I know what you're doing. Tell me if I get warm, okay? You want to end suffering -- right? Is that warm? You're kind of, like, in mourning, right? Right?

No response.

DINK

To be honest, Aviva, it's the only thing I can think of. Am I warm?

AVIVA nods her head yes but makes no response.

DINK

You did a good thing -- stupid, but good stupid, you know. Ruby knows that -- she's a little tight, you know, about admitting it because -- well, you know how she is, about giving anything away. But she knows you wanted to do the right thing by her. No regrets there.

Beat.

DINK

You got scared because of what could have happened to Ruby. Who knew what the girl was carrying -- not just in her heart, but in her pocket. Warmer? Man, I wish you'd say something. It's cold out here. I get scared, too -- every day. This world is not built to love us. Am I hot?

AVIVA

I had --

DINK

Bingo!

AVIVA

-- a dream.

DINK

Yeah! Talk to me. Talk to me.

AVIVA

I had a dream.

DINK

Dreams are good. Very saint-like -- cool.

AVIVA

I want you to do something for me.

DINK

Anything.

AVIVA

Before I say anything to you.

DINK

Give it to me.

AVIVA

Drop the sarcasm and smart-mouth. No more. It makes everything stink.

DINK  
It does, does it?

AVIVA  
It's part of the problem.

DINK  
I'm part of the problem?

Beat.

DINK  
So, don't stop. What kind of dream?

AVIVA  
Yes or no.

DINK  
Yes. Consider it dropped. Go on.

AVIVA  
Voices -- all around me.

DINK  
Whose voices?

Beat.

DINK  
Aviva?

AVIVA  
Our brothers and sisters.

DINK  
Yeah? Do I know them?  
(realizes her saracastic tone)  
Sorry.

AVIVA  
I am in here for them. For all of them.

DINK  
Who are they?

AVIVA  
Ringyat, Kidyane --

DINK  
You don't know anybody --

AVIVA  
Maria, Marta, Cassie --

DINK  
-- with that name. Cassie?

AVIVA  
Becka, Fatima -- they spoke.

DINK  
To you?

AVIVA  
They asked me to help!

DINK  
These voices.

AVIVA  
These brothers and sisters!

DINK  
Aviva, man, you have to come out. You have everyone weirded out and wired. Me, included. I know what you're doing in there, but it's not going to work. You're sitting in meditation, right?

AVIVA  
I am going to make it end.

DINK  
Exactly -- sitting down on your behind -- I'm sorry, I just can't keep that smart-mouth shut, it's all I got -- sitting there on your pretty little butt starving to death to put end to death. And just how is that supposed to work?

AVIVA  
I am finding a way to make it stop.

DINK  
Look, I admire all of this. It's cool, it really is -- even if some of us are freaking out because you're starving yourself down to zero! -- but, hey, free choice, rah rah and all that, Aviva's so smart, don't let anyone tell her different.

AVIVA suddenly steps through the "door," as if coming out of her room, and startles DINK.

AVIVA  
Shut up!

DINK  
Hey!

AVIVA

You don't know one-half of one percent of most of nothing -

DINK

Smart mouth got you out!

AVIVA

-- so shut your gob.

DINK

Gonna hit me?

AVIVA

And what are you doing --

DINK

(Pointing to her chin)

C'mon --

Starts mock-boxing around AVIVA.

AVIVA

-- you, the rebel, so puffed up about yourself being so radical? My butt, radical! Just one big smart-mouth.

DINK

Leave my mouth out --

AVIVA

You so radical? You should be in here with me, so where's your heart, because you ain't anywhere near here.

DINK

Why? So we can go all mystical and think we're better than everyone else because we have dreams?

(mockingly, in rhythm)

"We're so pure, and you are not."

AVIVA

What's wrong with a little purity?

DINK

It stinks.

AVIVA

Meanness was going to blow Ruby away.

DINK

I know that!

AVIVA

It's meanness that makes your smart motor-mouth jump. And you don't think we should do something to get rid of that?

DINK

Rid of it? I'll tell you what's mean. I think we should blow away the whole mean mess and start all over again!

AVIVA

Just rock and roll!

DINK

You know what I'd like to do? You want to know mean? Listen to me! I'd like to cram every adult into our skin and march them through all the stupidity, all the blood sacrifice, of being a child in this world, in their world, all of it --

(notices something about AVIVA)

What?

AVIVA

The voices --

DINK

The voices --

AVIVA

That's what they were saying --

DINK

Then add mine in. Blow it all open.

AVIVA

No, no --

DINK

Listen to me! How the adults just move us around and use us and lie to us and hurt us and then dump a world on us full of poison and explosion and then tell us it's our responsibility to be leaders, our responsibility to clean it up and make it better so they can go off and steal and lie some more.

AVIVA

That's what they were saying --

DINK

Beeba, Beeba, all kids are victims 24-7-365, no matter what. And you sitting in there full of pity, trying to get pure, ain't going to stop anything. You have to act, man, we have to act, because they are acting every day.

AVIVA

No, no, no --

DINK

Why not?

AVIVA

Don't you hear it, Dink?

DINK

What?

AVIVA

Don't you hear it in your own heart?

DINK

What?!

AVIVA

Meanness, hatred, get even, get revenge, make them pay -- keep that in there, and then things will never change. No more! No more, Dink! I don't want it in here anymore.

(pointing to DINK's heart)

Or in there. Not in the heart of my best friend. I'll start with my own, but I'm going to start with yours, too, even if it kills me --

DINK

You don't need to go that far.

AVIVA staggers a little. DINK helps her sit on the floor.

DINK

But you do need to go this far, or else you're going to go timber. C'mon, sit down.

They sit on the floor.

AVIVA

Thanks. I am very tired.

DINK

You're not the only one.

AVIVA  
And hungry.

DINK  
Food's that-a-way.

AVIVA  
Then I think it's time to go that-a-way.

DINK  
This mean you're coming out?

AVIVA  
Yes.

DINK  
For good?

AVIVA  
For good and for friends. You can go, now, if  
you want.

DINK does not move.

AVIVA  
Really. You've done your duty.

DINK does not move.

AVIVA  
You're still here.

DINK  
Yep.

AVIVA  
So, okay -- does this mean you're going to come  
in?

Beat.

AVIVA  
Me to your world -- come out.

DINK  
Yeah.

AVIVA  
You to mine -- come in.

DINK  
In, then. For friends.

AVIVA  
Only real reason to do anything.

DINK  
Yeah.

AVIVA  
Stop meanness.

DINK  
Yeah.

AVIVA  
Then, rink-o-Dink, I think we have us a chance.  
And all of them, too.

DINK  
The voices?

AVIVA  
I will tell you everything about the voices

Beat.

DINK  
(hesitating)  
What did you do about -- you know -- personal  
hygiene in there?

AVIVA  
Nothing in -- nothing out.

DINK  
Simple.

AVIVA  
Hard.

DINK  
Just thought I'd ask. You had us so scared.

AVIVA  
I had me scared.

DINK  
Glad you're back.

AVIVA  
Still scared.

DINK  
Honest? Me, too.

AVIVA

Then I will tell you about the voices.

The VOICES come out on stage, followed by the rest of the CROWD and RUBY, PEARL, and YASMIN.

AVIVA

To end suffering -- the butterfly's wing.

DINK

That's you and me, huh?

AVIVA

And everyone.

DINK gets up and makes a funny gesture of flying by tucking her thumbs into her armpits and flapping her arms.

DINK

I'm a butterfly. Is this how it works?

AVIVA

(gets up as well)

You look like a chicken.

DINK continues to flap her arms like a chicken, and AVIVA joins her, the two of them moving around like spastic chickens until they break up laughing and embrace. Everyone brings their hands together, palm to palm, and holds them heart-high. Then, in one motion, they bow to the audience. Lights go quickly to black.