

HONG KONG DATE NIGHT

By Angela J. Davis

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CAST

LE LE A male panda bear. Jovial, robust, and ageless. Long-term resident of a wildlife preserve managed by humans.

YING YING A female panda. Charming and well-mannered. LE LE's housemate of several years.

GRISELDA A very attractive, very fit female fruit bat.

Story:

This play is inspired by true events. See: "Hong Kong Pandas Mate for First Time in Privacy of Coronavirus Lockdown," *The Guardian*, April 7, 2020:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/07/in-the-mood-for-love-hong-kongs-middle-aged-pandas-rediscover-their-mojo>

Notes:

All roles are open ethnicity and the playwright strongly advocates diversity in casting.

The animals should not be in full animal costume — just a few accoutrements (e.g., paws, ears, etc.) will suffice.

The names "Le Le" and "Ying Ying" are the actual names of the middle-aged panda bears who "found their mojo" (and some evidently needed quiet time) during the COVID-19 lockdown.

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April 2020. Nighttime in the mammal section of a Hong Kong wildlife preserve. YING YING, a middle-aged female panda bear, returns from a swim as LE LE, a male panda bear and her roommate of several years, chomps bamboo.

LE LE

Wanna share a branch with me?

YING YING

I ate earlier --

LE LE

So . . . ?

(perhaps patting his stomach)

Come on, I really shouldn't finish the whole tree.

(Tears off a branch, passes it to YING

YING. As they continue, SHE eats more.)

You looked really pretty just now.

YING YING

What?

LE LE

Coming out of the water . . . your fur catching the moonlight --

YING YING

Are you . . . making advances?

LE LE

We're animals in captivity!

YING YING

Yeah, I sorta figured that out like about sixteen years ago --

LE LE

We're supposed to hit on each other! I mean -- it's what the whole world has been waiting for all those sixteen years!

YING YING

I -- I -- I don't know about you, but I have NEVER forgotten that I was kidnapped!

LE LE

Uh huh.

YING YING

Adding to that --

The kidnapers keep trying to spy on us with these square-shaped glass eyes!

(shudders at the thought)

UGH! Where does that species learn their manners?!

LE LE

Sapiens. The worst.

YING YING

(lowers her voice)

I know! I'm still not over the time they tried to get me pregnant themselves --

LE LE

WHAT?!

YING YING

With -- you know -- "equipment" --

LE LE

OH! Yes, that -- that does sound --

YING YING

Come on, don't act like you don't know this!

What were you thinking when that female zoo keeper gave you a hand job?!

LE LE

Oh.

YING YING

I mean, wasn't that the most horrible experience of your life?!

LE LE

Well . . .

(Beat.)

But -- Ying Ying -- haven't you noticed . . . something . . . different around here lately?

YING YING

Um --

LE LE

They -- the sapiens -- they haven't been around for like, I dunno, weeks.

YING YING

. . . Um hm.

LE LE

(luxuriates in a deep breath)

The air! And the quiet!

YING YING

. . . It has been nice.

LE LE

You know -- I think that's why you've been going in the water so much.

YING YING

And you've been leaving your scent everywhere.

LE LE

Well . . . I thought maybe you'd like that.

YING YING

I do.

LE LE

There's been some chitter chatter in the monkey cage.

YING YING

You were listening in on the monkeys?

LE LE

With all the quiet, I didn't have to try!

And -- you know -- monkeys are smart! I thought I might learn something.

YING YING

Oh. Okay. . . . so . . . ?

LE LE

The sapiens! They -- THEY are in captivity now!

What?!

YING YING

That's WHY it's so quiet!

LE LE

Oh!

YING YING

There's a disease!

LE LE

OH! A -- you mean a sapien disease?!

YING YING

LE LE
(lowers his voice)
It started with a bat.

YING YING
The flying rats who hang upside down and bite all the females?! UGH!
(shudders and shrieks)

LE LE
Shhhhhhhhhh. Come on, you don't want to panic the whole neighborhood.
(lowers his voice)

Anyway. A bat gave it to one of those -- you know the foreigners with the scales all over and the long, er --

YING YING
A pangolin.

LE LE
Right! After he got it from the bat, the pangolin gave it to a sapien, and now ALL the sapiens have to hibernate like bears or they'll ALL die!

YING YING
(taking it in)
Wow. You got all that from the monkey cage.

LE LE
Moral of the story: never trust a mammal who doesn't follow the basic rules!
If it's a mammal but it's got two big wings, or its got scales all over its body, or it walks on two legs but it's not hairy, just stay the hell away!

YING YING

My God -- you're right!

LE LE

It's a jungle out there.

(Pause. HE moves closer to her.)

You know, Ying Ying, the truth is, all of us here -- every single one of us -- was kidnapped.

YING YING

Um hm.

LE LE

Or their parents were kidnapped.

YING YING

Doesn't make it okay.

LE LE

No. But maybe -- especially now, at this moment -- it makes it even more important to be who we are -- and what we are. And, Ying Ying, I'll never do anything you don't want me to do but -- our species is vulnerable!

And -- I just wanna say -- from the first time I laid eyes on you --

YING YING

Shhhhhhhhhhh. Me too.

YING YING leans in to kiss LE LE. A wild shrieking and flapping stops them. It's GRISELDA, a very attractive, very fit female fruit bat.

GRISELDA

(shrieking)

. . . EEEEEeeeeek!

(SHE stops, finds a place to hang, literally and figuratively.)

YING YING

What in the --

GRISELDA

(panting and hyperventilating)

Ohhhhhhh! PHEW! That's better. . . . Bring the heart rate down . . . BREATHE!

YING YING

(to LE LE)

Oh no. Le Le, is that what I --

LE LE

Yes. It is. A BAT! I'll handle it.

(waves a stick of bamboo at GRISELDA)

HEY -- HEY YOU! -- OUTTA HERE! Back where you belong!

GRISELDA

NOOOOO! . . . PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE! . . . PLEASE DON'T HURT ME! . . .

YING YING

Le Le, WAIT! It's a female! And she's scared!

GRISELDA

Please . . . please . . . please! I promise! I'll leave you alone! But what . . . where am I -- ?

LE LE

You're in the bear section. And as you can see --

GRISELDA

Actually, no -- I can't -- I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING!

LE LE

Yeah, right! We just saw you circling like a fiend! Like -- a bat outta . . . somewhere.

YING YING

Le Le! She's telling the truth!

LE LE

What?

YING YING

Echolocation!

GRISELDA

Wow. Smarter than the average bear! You are also a bear, I take it?

LE LE

Yes, she is, and our species is vulnerable, if you know what I mean. So if you don't
wanna leave voluntarily --

(brandishes the bamboo)

GRISELDA

(still catching her breath)

I -- I -- I won't hurt you! I don't hurt anyone! Unless you're in tight with the mosquitos --

YING YING

God, no! We can't stand those guys!

GRISELDA

OH, good! I can easily eat twice my body weight in mosquitos --

YING YING

Really? How do you stay so thin?

GRISELDA

Flying! It's the best! Burns like eighteen thousand calories an hour!

YING YING

Oh!

*(GRISELDA pants and sighs a little more,
still worn out.)*

But . . . why are you so upset?

GRISELDA

It's -- I can't even -- over there -- it's turned into this total meat market!

YING YING

What?!

GRISELDA

With the sapiens gone, all the guavas and mangoes and sugar palms are fermenting! EVERYONE in the bat cave is getting totally plastered! And -- bats -- on a normal day have ZERO inhibition -- they're polyamorous, polygynous, polyandrous, POLY-EVERYTHING! And *NOW*? With round-the-clock free drinks and no zookeepers?

LE LE

Can't you just do what all the other mammals do and say you have a headache?

GRISELDA

NO!

(lowers her voice)

Who knows when the sapiens are coming back?! And with, you know, that thing -- the disease? -- If you're a bat, and you act sick, they might take you off to a laboratory, where God only knows what happens next, and -- I, I, I just can't take that risk because
(MORE)

GRISELDA (CONT'D)

(starts to weep, then blurts it out)

I'M THREE HOURS PREGNANT!

YING YING

OH!

GRISELDA

Please! You'll have your privacy because I can't see! And I'll keep your whole place mosquito free for as long as you want! But I - I - I'm going to be a mother next month! I'm getting emotional! And ALL I WANT -- is -- is just a quiet place to . . . you know --

YING YING

Hang.

GRISELDA

Yes! Exactly!

LE LE

Look Miss --

GRISELDA

Griselda.

LE LE

Griselda. Nice to meet you.

(introducing himself and Ying Ying)

Le Le and Ying Ying.

GRISELDA

(still emotional)

Cute names. I always hated mine.

LE LE

Griselda, I'm sorry. You seem like a very nice bat, and I'm sure you'll be an excellent mother, but we would really like you to --

GRISELDA

It's okay. I understand.

(GRISELDA unfolds her wings, takes a deep breath, prepares to leave)

YING YING

WAIT! I have an idea!

LE LE

Ying Ying --

YING YING

Griselda, do those pointy little ears of yours sense a buzzing -- like wire frequencies and radio signals?

GRISELDA

YES! All the time!

YING YING

No, I mean -- like -- like from something -- something without a heart!
... But close, very close.

GRISELDA

(echolocating now; sensing it out)

There's -- there's one of those -- one of those big glass eyes! -- It's on a pole, I think?
And it's -- YES! -- It's right in front of your house!

YING YING

WOW! You're GOOD!
... Griselda, we were -- Le Le and I --

GRISELDA

You were on a date. Yeah, I sorta figured that --

LE LE

A date sixteen years in the making.

YING YING

But I -- I -- I never consented to be --

GRISELDA

The star of an X-rated movie for another species?

YING YING

Right! ... So ... maybe you could --

GRISELDA

Hang right in front of that big glass eye?

YING YING

Make yourself at home? Let down your wings?

GRISELDA

(liking the idea)

Take a solo nap? A little “me” time before the baby comes!

YING YING

Does that sound . . . like . . . a plan?

GRISELDA

I’m heading over now.

(unfolds her wings, it’s a short sprint)

YING YING

BRAVA, BRAVA! Is it okay? Are you comfortable up there?

GRISELDA

(yawns starts to nod off)

It’s perfect. I might head out for brunch around three in the morning --

YING YING

Mosquitos?

GRISELDA

There’s a pond down there, right?

YING YING

Yes. Yes, there is.

You can’t see it, but it’s a beautiful pond.

END OF PLAY