



Louisa's Choice

WRITTEN BY JO DORRAS

Wan Smolbag performed this play 'in the round.' This means that the audience sit in a circle and the actors act in the circle. The round makes the audience feel they are actually involved in the play.

It doesn't matter if one of the actors has his or her back to you as the other actor will be facing you. This play needs a minimum of 6 actors.

[A young woman walks into the acting area, the sound of wolf whistles and laughter fills the air. She looks round angrily.]

Louisa: Shut up! Shut up I said!

[A young man walks through the audience. He is very sure of himself.]

Louisa: I'll kill you! I'll scratch your eyes out! I'll...

Johnny: What did I do?

Louisa: Whistling at me! I hate it!

Johnny: All the men whistle at you, Louisa. You're pretty. *[He has walked up to her while he was speaking. She tries to push past him and leave. He grabs her arm and holds it very tight.]*

Johnny: You know how I feel about you, Louisa.

Louisa: Let me go!

Johnny: You feel the same! Why don't you say it! I want to marry you!

Louisa: No!

[Another man has come in and is watching them]

Fred: Leave her alone, Johnny!

Johnny: *[Dropping Louisa's hand]* It's none of your business!

Fred: She doesn't want you touching her!

Johnny: You! *[He takes a step towards Fred]*

Louisa: Stop it! Don't hit him Johnny! *[She is now angry with Fred]* Why did you have to stick your nose in?

Fred: I was trying to help you, Louisa!

Louisa: I'm tired of both of you following me around! I want you to leave me alone! I don't want to see you again! Either of you!

Fred: I didn't do anything Louisa, I just wanted to help you. I'd do anything for you...

Louisa: Just go away then! *[Johnny starts to laugh at Fred]*

Louisa: And you too!

[She starts to storm off but stops as Johnny shouts out]

Johnny: You're as beautiful as a young hibiscus flower. I can't go away from someone as lovely as you!

[Louisa hurries out then comes back in. The other actors are the chorus, commenting on Louisa's actions.]

Chorus: As beautiful as a young hibiscus flower...

[Louisa stops and picks up a flower from the ground and holds it to her face]

He's handsome. His eyes are bright with love.

All the women want to know



When you'll marry him.

[She crushes the flower and treads it into the ground]

Louisa: Never! I'll never marry! Not him, not anyone!

Chorus: Louisa! Louisa! Louisa! *[The other actors come on to the stage]*

That girl's crazy!

Never marry!

Everyone has to marry!

Every girl dreams of her wedding dress *[A girl comes on wearing a veil and a boy comes to take her hand]*

White lace, red hibiscus flower

As she walks to the church

Her father watches

Full of pride

Her mother's tears fall

As she takes her vows

And the village lads sigh

Such a lovely girl and now she's,

Now she's married!

See her husband take her hand

And she promises to obey

She must always stay by his side!

Every girl dreams of her wedding dress

White lace

Red hibiscus flower

Louisa: But I'm not ready!

Chorus: You too, Louisa! You must marry!

You must choose, Louisa!

[While they are talking she exits]



[Louisa comes back in with her washing. Her father is sitting on stage.]

Louisa: *[To audience]* I'm not getting married! I'm not! I know what men are like! I've seen enough! *[She drops the washing on the ground and then sees her father sitting in silence]*

Father: You're not going anywhere today are you?

Louisa: No... No I don't think so. Why, Father?

Father: Johnny's father came to see me. He wants to bring the boy this afternoon and talk.

Louisa: Talk? Talk about what?

Father: About you. It's time you married.

Louisa: I'm not an old woman. I've got plenty of time to get married.

Father: You should have a husband and children of your own.

Louisa: I don't like Johnny, Father. I've told him...

Father: You don't think anyone is good enough for you, my girl! One day you'll be sorry!

Louisa: But Father...

[Another woman walks in, Louisa's sister, Theresa]

Louisa: Theresa! *[She gets up and gives her a hug. Theresa then goes to kiss her father.]*

Father: Didn't you bring the children?

Theresa: I left them at home.

Father: With Edward's mother?

Theresa: Yes.

Father: You should have brought them!

Theresa: They're fine. Don't worry, Father. Louisa, I'll help you with the washing. Give me some... *[She goes and sits]*



down next to Louisa and starts to fold clothes]

Father: You've got plenty to do at home, Theresa. There's no reason for you to run away to help us.

Theresa: I'm not running away, Father!

Father: Edward knows you're here?

Theresa: I didn't see him. I just came. I'm not running away, Father!

Father: I hope you're not, Theresa, you know that a wife must stand by her husband... *[A man's voice shouts the father's name from behind the backdrop]* Ah!... Coming! Coming! *[He exits]* What does he want?*[They watch him go]*

Louisa: Theresa... Are you alright? What's happened?

Theresa: The same thing that always happens! He beat me.

Louisa: I hate him! I wish I could bash him and punch him and... *[She gestures to show what she would do]*

Theresa: *[She laughs]* He'd break you into little pieces... *[She starts to cry]* He kept hitting me... He wouldn't stop. He threw me down and kicked me... Kicked me here... *[Louisa comforts Theresa]*

Louisa: Why, Theresa? Why did he hit you like that? What did you do?

Theresa: I just went out! Then when I came back he started going crazy. Saying I was lazy... I was looking for other men. He said all sorts of crazy things! *[She cries again at the memory]* I don't want to go back, Louisa. Please help me!

Louisa: What do you want me to do?

Theresa: Tell Father I have to stay. He'll listen to you!

Louisa: He'll say you have to go back. You know what he's like.

Theresa: You won't help me then?

Louisa: Of course I'll help you! I'll do anything...But what shall I tell him? *[They both look at each other trying to think of what they could tell the father]*

Theresa: Tell him I'm sick.

Louisa: He knows you're not sick! He'll just send you back.

Theresa: Tell him ... tell him ...

[The father comes round the backdrop again]

Father: Louisa! What's this all about?

Louisa: What? What's what about, Father?

Father: Don't pretend you don't know!

Theresa: It's not her fault, Father! She didn't even know...

Father: Not her fault? Fred's father comes here asking if Fred can marry her, and it's not her fault?

Louisa: What?

Theresa: Fred? Not Fred!

Father: How many boys are you seeing, my girl? The whole village will be talking about you! You've got to get married right away! Now which one is it? Fred or Johnny?

Louisa: Father! I can't! Theresa, tell him I won't get married! Tell him!

Theresa: Father....

Father: I'm not having any more of this! You are getting married, Louisa! You can make your choice, Johnny or Fred! *[He walks out before Louisa can say any more. As he leaves Louisa grabs Theresa.]*

Louisa: No! I won't! I'll run away....

Theresa: Where will you go?

Louisa: I don't know! I'll I'll go to town. I'm not getting married!

Theresa: Everyone has to get married sometime, Louisa...

Louisa: You want me to be like you? Get beaten all the time for nothing? That's not going to happen to me!

Theresa: You think you're so much better than everybody else, don't you?

Louisa: I don't! But I don't want to marry a man who will beat me. I don't!

Theresa: Ah! All men do it! You'll just have to get used to it!

Louisa: Oh... Theresa! *[She starts to cry]*

Theresa: Look it's not so bad. Women are made to suffer. We bear children in pain. We can take a few slaps from our husbands...



Louisa: *[Sobbing]* Then why do you run away whenever he beats you up?
[Theresa bursts into tears and hugs Louisa. Louisa stops crying and wipes her eyes.]

Louisa: I've got to choose. I've got to choose between Johnny and Fred. I like Johnny, but... he's the kind of man that will hit a woman. I know he is!

Theresa: What about Fred?

Louisa: I don't know! I don't know! How can I decide....

Theresa: Umm... ask them to do something. A test.

Louisa: A test?

Theresa: Like they do in fairy tales! *[She jumps up and starts to walk up and down excitedly]* You know the handsome prince wants to marry the girl, but before they let him marry her, he's got to do something! You know! Turn straw into gold...

Louisa: It's the girl that has to do that, not the prince!

Theresa: That doesn't matter! You know what I mean! You've got to think of a task they have to do. Run a race... um... Help someone to find something! Oh! You know what I mean...
[Louisa has been looking very unimpressed, then suddenly she has an idea.]

Louisa: Oh! Theresa! Theresa! You are the cleverest, most wonderful, brilliant, most,... most.... You're the best sister a girl could have!
[She grabs Theresa and dances round and round with her]

Theresa: Let me go! Let me go! You're mad! *[Louisa pulls Theresa off stage]*
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[Louisa comes back on stage pulling on Theresa. She has an envelope in her hand.]

Louisa: It's alright! You can do it!

Theresa: I can't! You should do it not me!

Louisa: It was your idea.. and now you won't help me!
[Louisa lets go of Theresa's hands and walks away]

Theresa: I will help you, I will! Just give me the stupid letter!

Louisa: I'll wait here...

Theresa: But what will I say?
[Louisa exits without replying. Theresa walks up and down, obviously worried and embarrassed.]

Theresa: *[Talking to imaginary people in audience]* Hello! No, I'm just going home... *[Johnny walks across the stage]*
 Oh! Yes! I'll see you tomorrow Auntie! I've got to go.... *[She follows Johnny who is walking round the circle. She keeps looking to check no one is around but stays quite a long way away from Johnny.]*

Theresa: Hmmm! Hmmm!
[Johnny turns and then sees Theresa, who signals to him. He doesn't understand at first and then as she gestures more and more wildly, he walks towards her.]

Johnny: Theresa? What is it?

Theresa: *[She pushes the letter into his hands]* Shhhhh! *[She runs off and Johnny tears open the letter]*

Chorus: You knew she would!
 What girl could say 'no'?
 What girl could say 'no'
 To a man like you?
 A few more hours
 And you can hold her tight
 Oh yes! She'll be yours tonight!
[Johnny kisses the letter and runs out]
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[Fred walks into the acting area, he stands waiting. Johnny walks up. They eye one another.]

Johnny: What are you doing here?



Fred: Nothing.... Just waiting.

Johnny: Waiting for what?

Fred: What's it to you?

Johnny: I'm meeting someone here. That's what!

Fred: Well so am I. I'm meeting Louisa.

Johnny: You can't be! I'm meeting Louisa!

Fred: Look... I've got a letter. She wants to meet me here, now, to talk about marriage...

Johnny: She told me to come here and meet her too! The little bitch! What's she playing at! Show me the letter! *[He tears it out of Fred's hand and starts to read]* Dear Fred, If you really want to marry me, come to the beach and wait by the shelter tonight. Louisa! She wrote the same letter to me! Exactly the same!

[Johnny tears the letter into bits and as he does this, Louisa and Theresa come through the audience. Louisa walks up to the two men and Theresa waits in the audience.]

Louisa: What are you so cross about, Johnny?

Johnny: You're fooling with us! Why have you told us both to come here? You'd better tell me quick.

Fred: Why did you ask him to come?

Louisa: Do you both still want to marry me?

Fred: Yes!

Johnny: Now you've got to choose which one of us you want!

Louisa: I'm going to choose. *[She pauses. Fred and Johnny stand waiting expectantly. Johnny obviously expects to be the one who is chosen]* I'm going to choose the one who can pass this test.

Johnny: Test, what are you talking about? Test?

Louisa: If you listen, you'll find out! I will marry the man who can stop all the other men in this village from beating their wives.

Fred: Say that again slowly...

Louisa: *[She speaks slowly and loudly]* I will marry the man who can stop all the men in this village from beating their wives!

Johnny: You're crazy! How can anyone stop husbands from beating their wives! It's what men do!

Louisa: That's what you think is it? Then I'll just marry Fred!

Johnny: No! I mean... This isn't reasonable Louisa! You can't do this to us!

Fred: We can try to stop them. I mean, if that is what she wants...

Johnny: She's trying to find a way out! She's trying to find an excuse not to marry us!

Louisa: I swear to you, that I will marry the man who passes the test.

[Johnny and Fred are confused for a moment]

Johnny: I want witnesses! If I do it, I don't want you changing your mind, or deciding to give us something else to do! I want a witness!

[Theresa stands up]

Theresa: I'm your witness. I saw Louisa agree to marry the man who passes the test.

Louisa: Now are you going to do this or not?

Fred: What will you do if we say no?

Louisa: I'll, I'll....

Theresa: She'll become a nun. Then she won't marry anyone. I've spoken to the Sisters of the Sacred Heart and they are ready to accept her.

Louisa: *[She is totally surprised]* A nun?

Fred: How much time have we got?

Theresa: Two weeks.

Johnny: Two weeks? We need two years!

Louisa: I will meet you both here in two weeks time. *[She and Theresa start to exit. Then she turns to them one last time.]* Remember I will marry the man who passes the test. *[Louisa and Theresa run out]*

Johnny: A nun! The Sisters of the Sacred Heart? She can't do this!



Fred: There's only one way to stop her..

Johnny: We can't do it! It's impossible!

Fred: Maybe... *[Fred starts to walk out round the acting area]*

Johnny: You can't go telling men they can't beat their wives! Poking your nose into their homes...

Fred: Maybe...

Johnny: *[Running up to him]* What are you going to do? Don't think you're going to get Louisa! *[They walk off, Johnny following hard on Fred's heels]* You're not going to do anything without me knowing about it! I'm going to stay with you and watch everything you do!

[Fred looks all around and then walks across the stage. Johnny follows.]

Johnny: Where are you going?

Fred: That's none of your business!

[He tries to get past Johnny but Johnny keeps blocking his way, like a football player tackling]

Johnny: You're going to the police post, aren't you?

Fred: No, I'm not! *[He stops trying to get pass]*

Johnny: The police post! *[He laughs derisively]*

Fred: What's so funny! The police are there to enforce the law! They should stop men beating their wives!

Johnny: Go on then! Go and tell them to stop men beating their wives. Go and see what they say.... *[Johnny makes way for Fred to pass. Fred walks past him very quickly and crossly. Fred exits and Johnny laughs to himself.]*

Johnny: And I thought he was clever. But he is clever... Maybe... No! But what if it worked? I'd better go after him!

[Johnny walks out and walks straight into Fred who pushes him back the way he came]

Johnny: What did they say?

Fred: It's between a man and his wife. A family affair. They don't want to get involved. *[Fred is talking as he walks]*

Johnny: It's none of their business!

Fred: *[Stopping in his tracks]* That's what you think? You'll never stop men doing it if you believe that! Yes, I'll get her! I'll get her! You'll see! *[Fred skips past Johnny and then Johnny turns and rushes after him]*

Johnny: Come back! You're not going anywhere without me! Come back!

[They exit]

[Louisa and Theresa run on laughing.]

Louisa: A nun! With the Sisters of the Sacred Heart! But, Theresa, what happens if... if they don't do it? I'll have to become a nun, won't I? Theresa? Me a nun?

Theresa: I didn't think about that. I mean, I had to say something.

Louisa: Oh no! A nun!

Theresa: Nuns never get married. You didn't want to....

[The Father comes in with Edward, Theresa's husband. She sees him and freezes in mid-speech.]

Father: Edward has come for you, Theresa.

[Theresa stands up]

Edward: Why didn't you tell me you were coming here, Theresa? I was worried about you! Didn't you think about the kids? Come on! It's time to go home!

[Louisa squeezes Theresa's hand and then she watches her leave. The father watches too and then exits.]

Louisa: I will become a Sister of the Sacred Heart. I will. *[She exits]*

[Fred walks back onto the stage Johnny is just behind him. Fred is thinking.]

Chorus: Our village looks so quiet and nice



A perfect Pacific paradise
But when a man is angry
He must use his hands!
You can hear them every night...

Man: You were talking to him!

Woman: No! I wasn't!

Man: Don't lie to me! *[Cries and a scream]*

Chorus: He thinks he has the right.

Man: *[Coming on to the stage]* She's my wife isn't she?

Chorus: The right to hit

To keep on hitting

To bruise to break to smash

And no one dares say it's wrong

No one.....

Johnny: So what can we do about it?

Fred: Shut up, I'm thinking! Hmm... We can.... Wait a minute! I'm not telling you! You'll steal my idea and say it's yours!

Johnny: The only way we can do this is to work together! We can't do it on our own! Come on Fred!

Fred: If we do it together, which one of us will she marry?

Johnny: She won't marry either of us if she becomes a nun, will she?

Fred: Hmm... that's true..

[Edward and Theresa come in through the audience. Edward is pushing Theresa and shouting at her.]

Edward: Shaming me in front of your father! I'll make you sorry!

Theresa: Please, Edward! Please!

Edward: Wait till I get you home!

[Fred and Johnny are watching. They know this is their chance. Johnny pushes Fred.]

Johnny: Go on! Do something! Stop him!

Fred: Why me?

Johnny: Go on!

Fred: *[Walking up to Edward and Theresa]* Edward! Edward!

Edward: Fred? I can't talk now... *[He pushes Theresa]* I'm going home...

Fred: Stop pushing Theresa, Edward. You shouldn't treat her like that! She's frightened. She thinks you're going to hit her.

Edward: I am!

Theresa: Ohhhhhh!

Fred: Think about it Edward! It's not right! She's a woman, she can't fight you. Don't....

Edward: She's my wife, okay. *[He pushes past Fred and grabs Theresa. She starts to struggle.]*

Johnny: It's true, Edward. You shouldn't hit her.

Edward: Keep your nose out of my business!

[He gives Theresa a vicious push and then Fred and Johnny look at one another defeated]

Theresa: You said you'd stop them!

[Johnny grabs Edward and knocks him to the ground]

Edward: What did you do that for?

Johnny: We're going to stop men beating their wives!

Fred: That's right!

Edward: *[Standing up]* Well... I'm going to kill you! *[He starts to move towards them. They back away.]* I'm going to show you what happens to interfering busybodies...

Theresa: They did it! They stopped him beating me! They stopped him beating me! *[She gets up and runs out]*



[Louisa walks into the acting area. She starts to sweep angrily.]

Louisa: If I were an owl I'd fly
If I were a cockroach I'd crawl
If I were a snake I'd slither
And no one would catch me at all!

[Her father walks in but she pays him no attention and keeps singing]

Father: What's that crazy song you're singing?

Louisa: Just a song!

Father: You're sweeping the dust into my eyes! Louisa!

Louisa: Sorry Father...

Father: What's wrong with you this morning?

Louisa: How can you send her back to him Father? How can you do it?

Father: Send her back?

Louisa: Theresa! To Edward! You know he's going to beat her! You know it!

[Louisa's father is stunned by this attack]

Father: She's his wife. She must go back to him.

Louisa: No matter what he does to her? Even if he kills her?

Father: Kills her! That's stupid, Louisa!

Louisa: What about Angela? Samson kicked her to death.

Father: That's not true!

Louisa: He used to kick her when he got angry! Everyone knew about it. Then she got sick and couldn't hold down her food and then she died. She died because he broke something in her stomach. That could happen to Theresa too!

Father: That's enough!

[Louisa throws down her broom and turns her back to him]

Father: The sooner you're married the better! A husband will make you behave!

Louisa: He'll beat me like you beat our mother!

Father: How can you say that, Louisa?

Louisa: You think I didn't see? You think I didn't hear her crying at night? I won't marry a man who beats me! It won't happen to me Father! *[She runs out and leaves her father standing there. He suddenly seems very old.]*

Father: Cry at night? She never used to cry at night. I didn't hit her... once, maybe twice, I lost my temper with her. She wasn't a good woman. She ran away from me and the children... Yes! She ran away, before Louisa was old enough to know her! Heard her cry at night! She never heard her!

Chorus: She never heard her?

Not even that night...

That night when you came home drunk?

Father: I wasn't drunk!

Chorus: She didn't like it when you drank

She started talking

Father: About money, about my mouth stinking of drink.

Chorus: And you took the iron pipe

That was lying on the ground

You took it and....

[He picks up the pipe, stands holding it and then throws it to the ground]

Father: She made me do it! Nagging at me! I didn't mean to...

Chorus: That night she cried

Louisa hugged her all night



Louisa: Are you alright Mummy? Are you alright?

Chorus: And the next day
When you woke up
She'd gone.
The very next day.

[The father looks around and then slowly walks out]

[Johnny and Fred come on. Johnny is heavily bandaged, Fred is following fast on Johnny's heels.]

Fred: You can't go and tell her you've done it! It's not true!

Johnny: I stopped him beating her, didn't I?

Fred: But look what he did to you!

Johnny: A few bruises...

[Johnny is walking briskly towards Louisa's house, but as Fred speaks he slows down and finally stops]

Fred: Louisa said we had to stop men beating their wives. Are you going to be there every time Edward beats Theresa? You'll have to follow them wherever they go. Do you think you can do that?

Johnny: What else could I do? There's no other way!

[Louisa walks in fast and angry]

Johnny: Louisa! I did it!

Louisa: What happened to you?

Johnny: I stopped Edward from beating Theresa! I stopped him!

Fred: He beat up Johnny instead.

Louisa: Oh Johnny!

Johnny: Now say you'll marry me. I'll do anything for you! You can see that!

Louisa: Johnny I...

Fred: You promised to marry the man who stopped all the men in the village from beating their wives. He hasn't done that!

Johnny: But ... I stopped Edward!

Louisa: If you want me, you've got to do better than that! *[She storms off and he follows as the chorus comes on]*

Johnny: You're asking too much!

Chorus: The girl's taking things too far!

Who does she think she is?

She's not so pretty.

There are other girls around

Much prettier than she is!

You're a man!

Strong and dignified!

You can't go chasing a crazy girl

Show her who's boss now!

Johnny: Marry Fred then! *[Louisa stops]* You want me to do the impossible! Isn't it enough to know I love you! Yes! I'm not afraid to say it! *[He goes down on one knee and takes her hand]* I love you and I want to marry you. Isn't that enough? *[Louisa says nothing]* Ah! Nothing's enough for you! You want me to bring you the moon!

[He pushes her hand away roughly and exits]

Johnny: Every one says I'm crazy to run after you! Marry Fred! Maybe he's stupid enough to do every crazy thing you say!

Louisa: Johnny!

Fred: Louisa... *[He comes over and puts his hand on her shoulder]* You only marry me if I pass the test. If I can't do it, you're free. Don't worry Louisa.

Louisa: Thank you Fred.



[Louisa exits]

Fred: I've got to do it! I'm the only one left! How? How? *[He walks off thinking]*

[Theresa comes back in and starts stirring a saucepan. Louisa come in and stands close by her. Theresa looks up and is shocked to see Louisa standing there.]

Theresa: Louisa? Why didn't you say anything! You scared me. Coming in like a ghost! You know what happened? Johnny stopped Edward hitting me! Edward beat up Johnny instead, and now he's got a sore hand...

Louisa: He stopped Edward beating you? You mean he'll never do it again?

Theresa: He won't do it while his hand's sore. But I don't know about when he gets better... What's wrong?

Louisa: I feel so miserable. I wish I'd never started this! I wish...

Theresa: What the matter?

Louisa: He's given up. He told me to marry Fred.

Theresa: Johnny? But you said you didn't want to marry him! You didn't even like him!

Louisa: I didn't think I. ... But when Johnny said, 'marry Fred..' I knew I wanted to marry Johnny.

Theresa: You said you'd never marry him! *[She is exasperated]*

Louisa: I didn't want to marry him if he hit me. But he loves me...

Theresa: *[Stirring the saucepan faster]* You think he won't hit you, because he loves you? It's not like that!

Louisa: If a man really loves his wife he'd never hit her!

Theresa: Edward loved me! He still does. He gets jealous if I talk to any other man. Then he hits me. It's nothing to do with love!

Louisa: You really believe that? A man can hit his wife but he still loves her?

Theresa: Yes Louisa!

Louisa: Then I will marry Fred. If he does it, I will marry him. *[They exit]*

[Fred comes in he is walking briskly. He waves to one of the men in the audience.]

Fred: Are you coming? Yes! Good! I want to start before it gets too hot, so hurry up! *[The father and Edward walk across the stage]* You are coming?

Father: What's this all about?

Fred: I want to talk to all the men in the village.

Edward: Why?

Fred: Come along and you'll find out.

Edward: Why won't you tell us?

Fred: I want to tell everyone together. Come on! I'll see you there!

[Fred walks off and the two others cross the stage grumbling. Johnny comes on and runs up to Fred.]

Johnny: What are you doing? Calling the men together? You're not...

Fred: It's none of your business what I'm doing.

Johnny: I want to know! *[He forcibly stops Fred]*

Fred: Let go of me. *[Johnny lets him go]* I'm going to tell them they can't hit women any more.

Johnny: You think that will stop them?

Fred: I'm going to try!

Johnny: She'll never marry you, Fred.

[Fred walks off and Johnny follows him. They arrive at the meeting. Fred stands centre stage, Johnny joins the crowd.]

Fred: I've asked you all here, because I need to talk to you. *[Questioning noises from the crowd]* We all live together in this village. We know each other. We talk together every day. We talk about everything that happens in the village. *[They agree]* No not everything. Some things we never talk about. We never talk about men hitting their wives. *[An uncomfortable shuffling from crowd]* We don't like to talk about it. We want to pretend it doesn't happen.

Edward: I'm not listening to this!



Fred: Edward! You beat your wife. Is that why you're frightened to talk about it?

Edward: I'm not frightened!

Fred: I want to ask you all, is it right for men to beat their wives? Well, is it? *[Different answers are heard]* Do good Christians beat their wives?

Father: The Bible says women must do what their husbands say!

Fred: The Bible says we must love one another. It says if someone hurts us we must turn the other cheek. It doesn't tell us to hit our wives.

Edward: Who do you think you are? Talking to us like this! *[They start to shout him down]*

Johnny: My father beat my mother! You all know he did. I remember ... when I was a kid, her eyes all swelled up. Because he'd punched her. I hated him. Then as I got older, I thought that's what men do. A man has to beat his wife. Well, does he?

Edward: It's between a man and his wife! You can't tell a man what to do in his own home!

Fred: You know what the law of this country says? It says if you hit another person that's assault. You don't even have to hurt them. Assault is against the law. If you hit your wife you are breaking the law of this country.

[A general hubbub]

Johnny: Yes it's against the law! But the police don't do anything about it! And the elders in this village don't want to do anything either! I was like that too. I didn't think anyone had the right to tell a man what to do in his own house. I thought women needed to be ...slapped about, so they know who's boss. But now... I don't want my children growing up hearing their mother crying... I don't want that. I think the men of this village should stop beating their women. What do you think?

[The men are silent]

Father: We should stop. Yes. We should stop!

Fred: Do you agree? Do you all agree? Edward?

Edward: Well, we can try....

[Fred and Johnny hug one another and then release one another hurriedly. Then they both rush out.]

[Edward and the father come onto the acting area.]

Edward: I'm sorry Father. I haven't treated her right.

Father: I never spoke to you about it. I should have said something.... That's why her mother left.

Edward: She left you?

Father: She ran away, because I beat her. I thought Theresa would do the same to you. I always told her she had to go back. I didn't want her children growing up without a mother, like her and Louisa.

Edward: I've got a temper. Sometimes I just ... I don't think. It just happens.

Father: You've got to think, Edward. If she makes you cross, walk out the house. I wish I'd done that.

[The father walks away from Edward who stands watching him. The other actors come on to the edge of the acting area.]

SONG: If you had walked away
That night
Not let your anger rage
And hit and hit
Then she'd be here.
Would she still wear that flower in her hair?
There would be lines around her eyes now
And grey hair
She would be waiting
For you to come to her and say

Father: These last 10 years seem like a single day.

[Louisa walks on to the stage. Theresa comes from the other side of the acting area.]



Theresa: Louisa! Louisa! Something's happened!

Louisa: What is it?

Theresa: It's not happening any more!

Louisa: What do you mean?

Theresa: No one's being beaten! The men have stopped beating their wives!

Louisa: No!

Theresa: It's true! I've been down here every morning for the last week and not a single woman has come with a cloth over her face. Not one walking with a limp, or with a broken finger. Not one! And Edward!

Louisa: What's happened to Edward?

Theresa: He keeps telling me he's sorry...

[Edward walks in and sees Theresa]

Edward: Theresa! I'm going fishing! I'll be back tonight... you alright on your own? Go and stay with Louisa if you like.

Louisa: Stay with us but...

Edward: It's good for her to get away. My mother can look after the kids. *[He exits]* See you later, Theresa! *[Louisa watches him go open-mouthed. Edward blows her a kiss.]*

Louisa: But he hates you coming to stay. He never wants you to be away from home...

Theresa: I told you something's happened.

Louisa: Fred's done it. He's stopped them.

Theresa: Aren't you pleased? Aren't you pleased, Louisa? You've done it! You've changed all our lives! I'm so happy!

[She gives Louisa a big hug and then sees that Louisa is not happy]

Theresa: Louisa, this is what you wanted!

Louisa: It's tonight. I have to go and meet him on the beach tonight. I'll have to marry him, Theresa.

Theresa: He's a good man..

Louisa: Yes, he's a good man. *[She walks round the stage. Theresa exits.]*

Chorus: You said you'd marry the man
 Who could do it.
 You promised!
 You should be happy.
 He's done what no other man can do!
 And tonight you must give
 Yourself to him.
[Louisa walks off]

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[Louisa walks back onto the stage. She stands waiting. Fred comes on.]

Fred: So... we meet again.

Louisa: I want to thank you for what you did. I didn't think anyone could do it. You've passed the test and I must marry you.

Fred: You 'must' marry me?

Louisa: Well, that's what I said I'd do.

Fred: You make it sound hard. Don't you want to marry me?

Louisa: *[Looking away]* I said I'd marry the man who passed the test and I will.

Johnny: Wait a minute! He didn't do it on his own! I helped him!

Louisa: What?

Johnny: You've got to choose between us!

Louisa: He helped you Fred?

Fred: I called the men to the meeting. It was my idea. But Johnny did talk. I suppose he did help me. But he just talked! I arranged the whole meeting! *[Johnny is now standing in the acting area, looking at Louisa]*



Louisa: I thought you gave up, Johnny.
Johnny: I tried but my heart wouldn't let me.
Fred: It's not fair! He said he was giving up! I did all the work and now he wants to grab the girl!
Johnny: You should let her marry the man she wants, Fred.
Fred: She agreed to marry the man who passed the test!
Johnny: Yes, but what about love?
Fred: If she loved you, why didn't she marry you before?
Louisa: I couldn't marry till I was sure my husband would never hit me.
Fred: I'll never hit you! Never!
Johnny: I'd never hit my wife. After what Fred said at the meeting..
Fred: Ah! You admit it was me! I did it!
Johnny: Shut up you big-headed... *[Johnny grabs Fred and they start to fight]*
Louisa: Stop it! You want to solve everything by fighting! That's what you'd be like at home!
Johnny: *[Dropping Fred heavily on the ground]* You're right, Louisa. You should marry him. I'm no good... *[Johnny walks away]*
Louisa: Johnny! *[Fred starts to get up]*
Fred: You love him?
Louisa: I wish I didn't! But I do...
Fred: You couldn't be happy with me? You couldn't love me?
Louisa: I will marry you! I must! I'll try to forget him Fred. *[Louisa holds out her hand and Fred walks towards her then suddenly stops]*
Fred: You wouldn't be able to forget him Louisa. And every time he walked past and I saw you watching him.... I'd want to hit you! Beat you till you didn't think about him any more!
Louisa: No Fred!
Fred: But if there's one thing you've taught me Louisa, it's that I don't want to see my children crying because I've hit my wife. *[He walks away]* Good-bye, Louisa!
[Louisa stands there stunned and then runs to the exit]
Louisa: Fred! Johnny! Johnny! Johnny! *[She runs out]*
 * * *
[Louisa runs in and looks all around, Johnny walks past]
Louisa: *[Running in front of him and trying to stop him, but he keeps walking]* Johnny! Johnny! Stop! I have to talk to you!
Johnny: Get lost!
Louisa: You've got to listen to me!
Johnny: I listened to you and look where it got me! I got beaten up and made to look a fool... Just get out of my way!
Louisa: Johnny, Johnny...
[He walks past Louisa, who stands still watching him go. Then she shouts out.]
Louisa: I want to marry you!
Johnny: *[He stops in his tracks and then thinks and turns]* Oh yeah! *[Mocking her and coming close to her]* I want to marry you! And what have I got to do this time? Catch all the fish in the sea? Fly like a bird? Run round the island 100 times? Find someone else to marry, Louisa!
[He storms off and Louisa storms after him]
Louisa: Can't you listen to me for a minute!
Johnny: I've listened to you long enough! I wouldn't marry you now... not even if you got down on your knees and begged!
Louisa: Well, I ... *[She drops down on her knees and grabs his hand]* I want to marry you Johnny. I don't know why, but I want to marry you.
Johnny: You don't know why?
Louisa: Well, you're not... I mean. You're not the kind of man I thought I would marry, but I ...
Johnny: But you what!



Louisa: But I love you.

Johnny: I'll marry you Louisa ... if you promise... you'll never beat me!

Louisa: *[Louisa jumps to her feet]* Ah! It's not women that beat men! Men always want to blame women for everything! *[She sees he is joking]* Oh! ... Johnny!

Johnny: And I'll never beat you either, okay?

Louisa: You promise?

Johnny: Never, never ever.

[A rush of music and actors coming in. A white veil is thrown over Louisa's head by Theresa. Edward comes up and acts as the preacher.]

Edward: Johnny and Louisa today you become man and wife. You start on a journey. A journey full of love and pain. You, Johnny, are strong. Never use your strength against Louisa. Build your family life on love...

[Johnny takes Louisa's hand]

Chorus: The fairy tale has ended
The boy has won the girl
And now real life begins
Real life
With a thousand problems
A thousand changes
There will be sadness
Anger, pain and hate
Days when you wished
You'd never married
But when you want to
raise your fist and strike
Hold back
Don't beat her!
Keep her love alive.

