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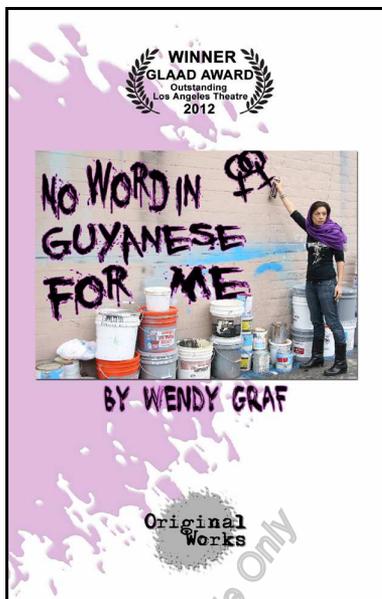
UNEMPLOYED ELEPHANTS

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*Also Available By
Wendy Graf*



NO WORD IN GUYANESE FOR ME

Synopsis: “No Word in Guyanese for Me” tells the journey of Hanna, who is made to choose between her identity and the support and love of her family and her precious faith. From her childhood in Guyana to her adolescence in pre and post 9/11 New York City, from a disastrous arranged marriage to her sexual awakening and discovery that there can be someone for whom she is enough, Hanna struggles to come to terms with her sexual identity, her devotion to her faith, and the right to be accepted for who she is while adhering to her family and her faith. Her faith and family test her, and finally Hanna must give them the choice: accept who she is—a gay Muslim—or lose her forever.

Cast Size: 1 Female

UNEMPLOYED ELEPHANTS

A LOVE STORY

By Wendy Graf

Sample Only

UNEMPLOYED ELEPHANTS – A LOVE STORY
was first presented by The Victory Theatre’s Barebones at
The Victory Theatre Center, Burbank, California on
March 9, 2018. It was produced by Maria Gobetti, Tom
Ormeny and Katie Witkowski. It was directed by Maria
Gobetti. The cast was:

Jane: Brea Bee

Alex: Marshall McCabe

Sample Only

CHARACTERS

Jane, *30s*

Alex, *late 30s-40s*

SETTING

The Southeast Asian countries of Thailand and Myanmar (formerly Burma), 2015.

Sample Only

UNEMPLOYED ELEPHANTS - A LOVE STORY

(We HEAR “Come Fly With Me” (Sinatra))

MONSOON SEASON – 2015

AIRPORT BUSINESS LOUNGE - BANGKOK, THAILAND

(JANE (late 30s) sits, looking out at planes temporarily grounded due to a pounding rainstorm. Flight status announcements can be heard, first in some undetermined language, possibly Thai or Chinese, then in somewhat indecipherable English.

ALEX (40s) enters with backpack, computer bag and rolling suitcase and looks around for an empty seat. There is one next to Jane. He unloads his bags on the floor, smiling and nodding at Jane as he does. She makes a point of not making eye contact. Alex sits and takes out his computer and fiddles around for a moment, then, to Jane.)

ALEX: What’s the password?

(No response.)

ALEX (CONT): Excuse me...The wireless password? For the lounge?

JANE: No. Sorry.

ALEX: They usually give it to you on the way in, but....

(Again, no response.)

ALEX (CONT): Right. I’ll go back up to the desk.

(He looks at her curiously for a moment then exits. Quickly, surreptitiously, she takes her cell phone out of one of her bags, logs in, checks her email. Nothing. But before she can return phone to her bag Alex reappears and notices.)

ALEX: Oh. Wow.

JANE: Yeah. Sorry.

ALEX: O-kay.

(He sits back down, logs in on his computer. After a few minutes:)

JANE: Sorry if I was.....

ALEX: Whatever.

JANE: I promised myself I would completely unplug on this trip. Disappear off the grid. But when they handed me a slip of paper with the password, I couldn't stop myself. I shouldn't have even brought my phone with me, it was stupid. It led to a lot of drunk texting. In fact.....

(She takes out phone.)

JANE (CONT):I'm turning it off right now. For good. Better yet, I'm throwing it away.

(She tosses the cell phone into the trash.)

JANE (CONT): Gone. Finished. Over. Kaput. You're a witness.

(She goes back and sits down. Long beat. Then she gets up again and retrieves the phone from the trash.)

JANE (CONT): I'll just throw away the charger. Then it will stay uncharged for the whole trip. It was an expensive phone, and what if someone found it and started using it, and then I get this humongous bill for roaming charges and out of network fees plus you never know if you have the right settings or have pushed the right green buttons so you won't be responsible for some sneaky iCloud Cellular Data Bluetooth charge that's a mistake, right? And how could I call and report it if I'd lost it?

ALEX: I knew someone once who lost their phone in a foreign country and before they could report it, someone charged up a million dollars of roaming fees.

JANE: Exactly.

(She unzips her suitcase and starts rummaging through, finding the charger and then throwing that away.)

JANE (CONT): There. Now it will just die. Probably don't have the right converter anyway. They didn't have Myanmar at the Travel Store. I had to go with Cambodia and hope for the best.

(She goes back and sits down. After a moment Alex rises and goes to the trash and takes out the charger. He goes back to his seat and puts the charger into his computer bag.)

ALEX: Always good to have an extra charger.

(Jane looks disturbed. Beat.)

JANE: I lied. I don't know why. I don't even know you. I didn't decide to unplug till just now. I've been in Bangkok for three days and done nothing but check my messages. I missed the Jim Thompson House Tour because you're not allowed to bring cell phones or cameras into the house, and I was too afraid to let go of my phone for five minutes. When people say "how was Bangkok?" I'll have to say "I don't know because all I did was check my fucking messages!"

(She bursts into tears.)

ALEX: If you don't mind my saying, you seem a bit undone.

JANE: I am. Undone. I'm very undone.

ALEX: I'm sorry.

(She cries for a bit more. He reluctantly hands her back the charger.)

ALEX (CONT): So you're going on to Miramar?

JANE: Myanmar. If it ever stops raining.

ALEX: Monsoon season. To be expected.

JANE: That's how I got a discount on the trip. Monsoon season.

ALEX: Me, too. The fare.

JANE: I figured how bad could it be?

ALEX: This bad.

JANE: Yes. Well. I don't really care if my plane is delayed. I have no place to be. No deadline. Nothing pressing.

ALEX: Free as a bird, eh?

JANE: Okay, I'm lying. I'm on a tour. I pick it up in Yangon.

ALEX: I'm going to "Me an mar" as well.

JANE: Road to Mandalay Tour?

ALEX: No.

(She breathes a small sigh of relief.)

ALEX: I'm on assignment.

JANE: Assignment?

ALEX: I work on Animal Planet. The TV show. Do you watch it?

JANE: No.

ALEX: We're doing a show about the unemployed elephants of Myanmar.

JANE: Unemployed elephants?

ALEX: Yeah, see the elephants used to be responsible for dragging giant tree trunks up and down the jungle hillsides, but Myanmar's new government has banned the export of raw timber. That's left them with an elephant unemployment crisis. Hundreds of elephants have been thrown out of work, and they aren't handling it well.

JANE: They're depressed?

ALEX: Elephants enjoy a sense of purpose in their work, and the loss of a job can be demoralizing. They become restless, angry, they're getting fat. All the males want to do is have sex all the time.

(Jane laughs.)

ALEX (CONT): It's a serious problem. There aren't enough female elephants to service them. And it's becoming more expensive to feed them. Elephants hold a mystical place in Myanmar.

JANE: Good to know.

ALEX: For hundreds of years they helped extract teak from the jungles, but now there's no more logging 'cause there's no more trees.

JANE: Huh.

ALEX: There was a strict labor code for elephants: eight-hour work days and five-day weeks, retirement at 55, mandatory maternity leave, summer vacations, good medical care. There are still elephant maternity camps and retirement communities run by the government.

JANE: You sound very passionate about this.

ALEX: When I get involved in a story I suppose I am.

JANE: *(Beat, suspicious:)* Where's your crew?

ALEX: What do you mean?

JANE: Your camera crew. Director, producers, cameras?

ALEX: Oh. Right. See, I'm an Associate Producer, and my job is to go to the location first and scout out the story - Who, what, where, how. Then I report back, and if everyone agrees there's a story, we all go back, the whole team, and shoot it.

JANE: So this is just a preliminary trip.

ALEX: Yes, exactly.

JANE: Well, enjoy your time with the elephants.

ALEX: And you enjoy your trip.

(They both go back to what they were doing.)

ALEX: I'm not going for the elephants.

(She looks at him.)

ALEX (CONT): I just wanted to try out how it sounds.

(Beat.)

ALEX (CONT): It's my cover story.

(She looks at him strangely. They go back to doing what they were doing.)

ALEX: I think it stopped raining.

JANE: Looks like it.

ALEX: What flight are you on?

JANE: Bangkok Airways.

ALEX: To Yangon?

JANE: Yes.

ALEX: 12:45?

(Jane sighs.)

ALEX (CONT): Hey, me too!

JANE: I don't want to talk.

ALEX: Excuse me?

JANE: I don't want to be rude but I don't want to talk.

ALEX: Gotcha. Weren't we just talking?

JANE: I don't want to be rude.

ALEX: You said that.

JANE: I just...don't.

ALEX: And here you were the only person I knew in Myanmar.

JANE: We're just on the same plane.

ALEX: No problem.

JANE: I'm just on this trip to.....

ALEX: Disconnect.

JANE: Yes.

ALEX: Want to check your messages once more before you disconnect for good?

JANE: No.

ALEX: Aren't you afraid your Twitter followers or Instagram followers or Facebook friends will be concerned when they don't hear from you?

JANE: I'm not on those things. And I deleted my Facebook Page.

ALEX: You can never delete it.

JANE: Well you can.

ALEX: I know people who died and they couldn't delete their Facebook page.

JANE: It takes fourteen days, and then they send you a bunch of messages to say are you sure, are you sure, are you sure you want to cancel, and if you don't answer they'll get the message-

ALEX: What if they don't? What if they don't hear from you and they take it to mean you want to reinstate?

JANE: It doesn't matter anyway. I posted a farewell to Facebook message then I changed all the privacy settings so I am the only person who can post or reply to messages and then I deleted the Facebook app on my phone and iPad and erased it from my toolbar on my computer-

ALEX: It's still out there. In cyberspace.

JANE: You're giving me a headache.

ALEX: Want me to check if it's really gone? What's your name, I'll check right now-

JANE: No. No names. No checking. No anything-

(A Flight announcement comes over the loudspeaker in a foreign language.)

ALEX: That's us!

JANE: You speak the language?

ALEX: I just heard "blubbidy, blubbidy, blubble Bangkok Flight 825 Yangon...."

(Jane stops an airport person.)

JANE: Excuse me, did they say Bangkok Airlines 825 to Yangon?"

(The person obviously answers in the affirmative. She and Alex exchange glances. They both pick up their belongings and head out, rolling their suitcases behind them.)

Sample Only

IN THE PLANE

(Jane takes her seat on the aisle, putting her things in the overhead, settling into her seat, fastening her seat belt. After a moment the passenger destined for the seat next to hers arrives. She unfastens her seat belt, gets up, steps aside, then repeats the procedure.

(After a moment Alex arrives and sits in the seat across the aisle from her.)

ALEX: Hey.

(Jane closes her eyes. Beat. She sits up and looks at him.)

JANE: What did you mean when you said it was just your cover?

ALEX: Said you didn't want to talk.

JANE: Are you *(whispering)* CIA?

ALEX: No.

JANE: Something like that?

ALEX: Kind of.

JANE: A detective?

ALEX: Of sorts.

JANE: What's a detective of sorts?

ALEX: I lied.

JANE: About what?

ALEX: About it being my cover.

JANE: You did?

ALEX: I really am from Animal Planet.

JANE: Why would you lie about being from Animal Planet?

ALEX: You lied about starting your trip in Bangkok.

JANE: That's different.

ALEX: A lie's a lie.

JANE: It wasn't a lie, just an irrelevant detail-

ALEX: Wasn't irrelevant if you had to lie about it.

JANE: It's not like I was lying about being in the CIA!

ALEX: Never said CIA.

JANE: You said a detective of sorts. That's what you said.

ALEX: But I never said CIA.

JANE: You used the term "my cover".

ALEX: So?

JANE: That's a CIA term.

ALEX: Is it?

JANE: I think it is.

ALEX: Let's Google it. Oh wait, you're disconnected and I'm in airplane mode. We can Google as soon as we land.

(Jane sits back and closes her eyes as the plane takes off. Beat.)

ALEX: Why are you going to Myanmar?

JANE: *(eyes closed)* Why not?

ALEX: Sort of a random destination.

JANE: Not really.

ALEX: Come on, don't tell me you've always had a burning desire to see Myanmar.

JANE: Maybe I have.

ALEX: Why?

JANE: Lots of reasons.

ALEX: Name one.

JANE: I can't name just one.

ALEX: What do you even know about it?

JANE: It used to be called Burma.

ALEX: Did you know it's the only country in the world whose time differs by 30 minutes instead of the normal whole hour?

JANE: What do you mean?

ALEX: Time Zones differ in hours, right? Like when - what time is it now in Bangkok? *(looks at his watch)* Okay, it's 10:30 A.M. in Bangkok. The next time zone over is Myanmar, but instead of it being an hour later, 11:30, it's 11:00 there now. And in the next Time Zone over, which is Cambodia, it is 11:30-

JANE: I get it. Besides, I think India is that way too.

ALEX: You didn't know about the elephants.

JANE: Cover stories are always well researched. That's how you can tell if someone's lying. If their cover story doesn't seem to have any holes in it then you can bet it's a cover story. Like when someone testifies in a lawsuit: if you're telling the truth you might not remember every single thing that happened three years ago, but if you're lying you have to memorize your entire story and then they can tell you're lying because it's just too perfect.

ALEX: This sounds like something you're very well acquainted with.

JANE: Maybe I am.

ALEX: Why the Road to Mandalay?

JANE: Because of the poem.

ALEX: What poem?

JANE: "The Road to Mandalay."

ALEX: It's a poem?

JANE: By Rudyard Kipling. So there.

ALEX: It had a great impact on you when you were a little girl? You yearned for far off, romantic exotic places, dreamed of elephants and incense and maharajas...?

JANE: There were no maharajas in Burma. That was India.

ALEX: *(reciting)*

“On the road to Mandalay,

Where the flyin'-fishes play,

An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost
the Bay!”

(She looks at him in disbelief.)

ALEX (CONT): “By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin'
eastward to the sea,

There's a Burma girl a-settin', and I know she thinks o'
me;

For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the temple-bells
they say:

"Come you back, you British soldier; come you back
to Mandalay!"

JANE: Huh.

ALEX: Yep.

JANE: The whole thing?

ALEX: All 12 verses. English major. *(Beat.)* Okay, I'm
lying.

JANE: Again?

ALEX: First heard the poem when I was twelve. I'm the
kid who dreamed of far off exotic places.

JANE: You're rather a romantic.

ALEX: Last of my kind.

JANE: I lied too. Never knew the poem. Never even heard of it till a few days ago. Never knew about the Road to Mandalay before this trip. Never even knew about Mandalay. The End.

(She sits back and closes her eyes again. Then:)

JANE: I won it.

ALEX: The trip?

JANE: In a raffle.

ALEX: You'd never heard of Myanmar?

JANE: I'd heard of Burma.

ALEX: I've never won anything. My brother was on a game show called *The Match Game*, and he won a car and a big screen television and a microwave. I hoped he'd share the big screen with me but he didn't.

JANE: Someone won it for me. Actually.

ALEX: You chose to go during Monsoon season?

JANE: Only time I could get away.

ALEX: Monsoon season.

JANE: Yes.

ALEX: Huh.

(She doesn't answer. Leans back and closes her eyes again.)

ALEX: After all this, don't you think we should know each other's names?

JANE: No.

ALEX: Why not?

JANE: You'll Google me. You'll look for my Facebook page.

ALEX: I promise I won't.

JANE: You won't be able to resist the impulse.

ALEX: I can find out. I'll check the plane registry.

JANE: They don't let people do that.

ALEX: They let some people.

JANE: I don't think they do.

ALEX: Remember, I'm sort of a detective. An investigator.

JANE: Maybe I'm travelling under a pseudonym.

ALEX: Are you?

JANE: Maybe. No. Well, sort of.

ALEX: Sort of?

JANE: Yeah, like you're sort of a detective.

ALEX: Want your nuts?

JANE: Huh?

ALEX: You didn't eat them. Not one of those people with a nut allergy, are you?

JANE: No. Just not hungry.

(He takes her nuts and starts eating them.)

JANE (CONT): And if I eat the nuts then I'll be thirsty and if I'm thirsty I'll have to go to the bathroom and I don't want to go to the bathroom because my guide in Bangkok told me that a lot of places in Myanmar don't have Western plumbing and I don't want to have to squat over a hole in the ground with all the flies and stuff.

(He stops eating the nuts and pushes them away.)

JANE (CONT): It's not the same for you. Your... apparatus.

ALEX: Still. An unappetizing prospect. Think they just have a hole in the ground at the airport?

JANE: I don't know.

ALEX: I mean, the airport?

JANE: My guide told me the hotels are fine because they are foreign owned but you can't be sure about anything else. People build new homes in Myanmar but they probably don't have Western toilets because they aren't used to them. He said they're kind of barbarians.

ALEX: The Burmese.

JANE: Don't call them Burmese. They don't like to be referred to by their English Colonial name, it insults them.

ALEX: The Myanmarians?

JANE: Yes.

(Beat.)

ALEX: You're kind of a funny chick, you know that?

JANE: Yeah.

ALEX: Still, you're the only person I know in Myanmar.

Sample Only

IN THE IMMIGRATION/PASSPORT LINE

(Jane, in one line, Alex in another. Jane has her passport opened in her hand. Alex leans over to try and read the name. She shuts it quickly, annoyed.)

JANE: I'm warning you.... People do really stupid things in foreign countries.

ALEX: They have suits made in Hong Kong.

JANE: They buy a lot of stuff that isn't real. Leather jackets that aren't really leather, wine glasses that aren't really Venetian glass, genuine gold leaf boxes from lacquerware factories that turn out to be machine made and sell in the hotel gift shop for \$15 after you paid \$150 because they told you it was real gold leaf!

ALEX: They lose their American Express card.

JANE: They don't take American Express in Myanmar. Mastercard either. Only Visa and you'd better call Visa in advance and let them know you're in Myanmar or else they'll think someone stole your card and block all your charges.

ALEX: Got it. I'll use cash.

JANE: They don't like to take foreign currency for an exchange - they'll only take it if it's perfectly flat with no folds and no creases and they won't take newer American bills with the larger picture of the president or if it has that blue line down the middle because they think it's not real.

ALEX: See, this is why I need you.

JANE: People aren't real in foreign countries. People think foreign countries give you a free pass to do whatever you like because it's not real and it doesn't count. They have sex with people because they know they'll never see them again. They ask people to marry them when they have no intention of going through with it. They buy diamonds that aren't really diamonds but foil backed glass. They tell you it's special uncut, raw stones, and you are stupid enough to believe them because you want to.

ALEX: Now I am intrigued.

JANE: Nothing's real in a foreign country. Nothing.
(beat) You weren't very prepared for this trip.

(She sees it's her turn at the Immigration post.)

JANE (CONT): Don't say I didn't warn you.

(She advances.)

AT THE POOL AT THE HOTEL

(Jane, in a complimentary coolie hat, slumbers in the sun. Alex appears.)

ALEX: Sign up yet for your complimentary massage?

JANE: Are you kidding me.....

ALEX: What luck staying at the same hotel, huh?

(He takes a seat on the lounge next to her, puts on the complimentary coolie hat and stretches out.)

ALEX (CONT): What time's your tour to the Shwedagon Pagoda?

JANE: What makes you think I have a tour there?

ALEX: Everyone has a tour there. It's their biggest attraction.

(He opens up a guidebook and reads:)

ALEX (CONT): "Perched on a hill in what was once one of the most religious and oldest Buddhist temples on earth, a giant golden dome with several gold spires with their 7000 diamonds, sapphires and rubies that glisten as the sun bounces off-"

JANE: I thought you were here to work. *(beat)* 5 PM. Sunset.

ALEX: Me too.

JANE: Okay, look.....

(She sits up.)

JANE (CONT): I didn't win this trip. I'm here on my honeymoon.

ALEX: Oh. Wow. I never thought.... *(looking around)*
Seemed like you were traveling alone.

JANE: I was. Am. Alone.

ALEX: I don't get-is he/she meeting you here?

JANE: He's not coming. Ever.

ALEX: I don't...

JANE: I'm on my honeymoon but I am a bride without a groom, a pot without a cover, a ship without a sail. An unemployed elephant.

ALEX: Restless, angry and wanting to have sex all the time?

JANE: The invitations were out, the showers were held, the dress and veil was in final fittings, my parents paid fifty thousand dollars non-returnable deposit to a party space in Santa Barbara for our vintage rustic wedding in an all white palate. His parents paid the tax on The Road to Mandalay cruise they won in a silent auction with the stipulation it had to be taken in Monsoon season. Last week after the Couples' shower, after we received four champagne flutes off the register, after my final fitting because I lost ten pounds to look better in my dress he told me it was not me it was him and he didn't want to get married after all. He did not want to get married to me. I let him keep everything but this trip. I cashed in the two airline tickets for one business class ticket and decided to go anyway while back at home my parents erase all traces of him and move me out of the apartment while I disappear off the grid. That's all I want to do. Disappear. That was the plan. I'm sticking to the plan. So will you please, please, please let me?

(A long beat, then:)

ALEX: Let me buy you a drink.

JANE: No.

ALEX: One of those tropical things with the little umbrellas and fruit kabobs.

JANE: It always starts with little umbrellas and fruit kabobs. Next thing you know you're on the Road to Mandalay Tour, being escorted to the table of honor at a Thai buffet, close up with a good view of the native dancers, and there's an empty, seat next to you.

ALEX: I hate buffets. Okay then, a dirty martini.

JANE: I don't want people to feel sorry for me. I can't bear to look in their eyes and see "you poor thing."

ALEX: Or just a glass of Chardonnay. Turn it into your story. Own the narrative.

JANE: My heart is broken. I can't stop crying. I'm a total mess and I'll never be the same. Thank goodness I had the foresight to freeze my eggs.

ALEX: I think you're just saying that to see how it sounds. See you're owning the narrative already. I'm not saying turn it into performance art....Do you have your complimentary drink voucher, or do you have to go back to the room to get it?

(She sighs.)

JANE: Back to the room.

ALEX: Meet you in the Tiki Bar.

SUNSET AT THE SHWEDAGON PAGODA

(Walking, looking around. Looking at the big gold dome.)

ALEX: Oh. My. God.

JANE: Wow.

ALEX: Ever see so many Buddhas?

JANE: There's millions of them!

ALEX: It's a Buddha Disneyland.

JANE: Did you see the ones with the lights going around and around, like a shooting gallery? *(Giggling)*
"Buddhas are our business. Our only business."

ALEX: See that? You made a little joke. You must be feeling better. You would have left him eventually.

JANE: How would you know that?

ALEX: Because he sounds like a douche.

JANE: He is sort of a douche. I wonder where they sell all the cool earrings and bracelets. People always get cool earrings and bracelets in these places. And peasanty sort of shirts.

(They sit down on a ledge. Looking around.)

JANE: Lots of monks.

ALEX: Monk capital of the world. *(reading from guidebook)* "There are over 300,000 Buddhist monks in Myanmar. Their orange robes and shaved heads are instantly recognizable..."

JANE: What were you doing over there by those ones in the pink outfits?

ALEX: Those are nuns.

JANE: With the shaved heads?

ALEX: Yep. They're making their daily offerings and lighting the candles. I was just watching them do their thing...

JANE: Well, you missed the parade of these darling little girls, all dressed up in fancy costumes-

ALEX: Those are boys.

JANE: With the eye makeup and lipstick? God, I told one of them she looked so pretty....

ALEX: They're being inducted into the monkhood. It's a special occasion, the highest honor for a family.

JANE: But some of them looked so young, like three or four years old!

ALEX: Every male has to join twice in their lives - once as a kid and once in their twenties.

JANE: How long do they have to stay?

ALEX: Two weeks or a month. Unless they decide to stay forever.

JANE: You seem know an awful lot about monks.

ALEX: I'm a journalist. And monks are important to this country, economically and politically....

JANE: Where are you from?

ALEX: If you mean in a spiritual sense, I'm not a Buddhist. But I do go to yoga twice a week. Not the kind where they turn up the heat really high though, so everyone's sweating-

JANE: Bikram yoga. Which has been totally ruined by rich housewives in Lulu Lemon. I mean, where do you live?

ALEX: What happened to no details?

JANE: Definitely Boston. Or maybe Chicago.

ALEX: Chicago. That's where I grew up. Now I live in Bethesda, Maryland. That's where Animal Planet is produced.

JANE: I'm not totally buying this Animal Planet story...

ALEX: Would someone make up that they worked for Animal Planet?

(She agrees.)

ALEX (CONT): Okay, I'm not being completely honest.

JANE: I knew it.

ALEX: I live in San Francisco. I work freelance for Animal Planet.

JANE: Does your family still lives in Chicago?

ALEX: North shore.

JANE: You visit much? When you're not on assignment for Animal Planet?

ALEX: Not as much as I should.

JANE: You said you had a brother. Is he there-

ALEX: Most of the family moved away. Big Catholic family. 7 kids. It's....hard. My mom's kind of.... she's difficult to be around. Sad. Very sad. I had a sister who.... well, we lost her.

JANE: Oh. That's why your mother is sad.

ALEX: Definitely a prominent factor.

JANE: How old was she when she-

ALEX: You ask a lot of questions for someone who wants no details.

JANE: What did she die of?

ALEX: Religion. Politics. Take your pick.

JANE: Is this a joke?

ALEX: Yeah, one that my family loves to tell. Always gets a big laugh.

JANE: I'm sorry. I didn't mean...I just, you know, oh my god....You don't want to talk about it.

ALEX: Not particularly.

JANE: Sorry.

ALEX: It's okay.

(They sit down on a ledge.)

ALEX: Water?

JANE: I don't want to have to go to the bathroom.

ALEX: Undoubtedly just a hole in the ground here.

JANE: Exactly what I was thinking.

(She takes out cigarettes from her pocket. Quickly he swats them down, startling her.)

ALEX: Put 'em away!

JANE: Why? What's-

ALEX: *(sotto voce, looking over his shoulder)* See those guards walking around? They're military police. They take their sacred religious spaces very seriously here.

JANE: Jesus!

She looks around then scared, stashes them quickly back into her pocket.

ALEX: When you signed your visa you were agreeing to uphold Myanmar's rules and customs. A Dutch tourist who unplugged an amplifier that was broadcasting Buddhist chants was sentenced to three months hard labor in prison.

JANE: How do you know so much about this?

ALEX: *(quickly)* I just read it someplace. Some discarded newspaper or something. I spend a lot of time in airport lounges for my work. So you smoke.

JANE: I do now. Since.

ALEX: This could be a deal breaker. How many cigarettes would you say you smoke in a day?

JANE: Depends on if it's a really heavy smoking day.

ALEX: Hard on your lungs.

JANE: Not as much as smoking pot.

ALEX: Bring any with you?

JANE: No way. I saw Midnight Express.

ALEX: That was Turkey. What's your plan?

JANE: Plan for what?

ALEX: Your travel plan.

JANE: Leave in the morning to catch the boat for the Road to Mandalay.

ALEX: Why do they call it the Road to Mandalay when you take a boat? Why don't they call it the Boat to Mandalay?

JANE: That's just what they call it.

ALEX: Kind of misleading.

JANE: Probably because of the poem.

ALEX: Not many people have heard of the poem.

JANE: You don't know that.

ALEX: You didn't.

JANE: True.

ALEX: How long?

JANE: Seventeen days.

ALEX: Being cooped up on a Myanmarian seagoing vessel with a bunch of....?

JANE: Australians. And British. Who probably heard of the poem.

ALEX: While you tromp around a country whose main source of revenue is rice for the monks.

JANE: Bagan is supposed to have over 800 antique temples in 26 square miles.

ALEX: Now there's a draw.

JANE: I want to go off the grid. This seems like the perfect place.

ALEX: Here's an idea. Go with me.

JANE: To see the elephants?

ALEX: Two lost souls living off the grid.

JANE: You're working. That's doesn't qualify. It doesn't really entitle you to call yourself a lost soul.

ALEX: Do you think I'd be doing a story on the unemployment problems of the elephants of Myanmar if I weren't somewhat lost?

(She considers this.)

ALEX (CONT): I just gotta say, I find you incredibly attractive.

JANE: Okay, no.

ALEX: Would it freak you out-I mean, would you go ballistic if I kissed you?

JANE: I warned you - people think foreign countries gives you a free pass to do whatever you like because it's not real and it doesn't count. They have sex with people because they know they'll never see them again.

ALEX: Not right now. Kiss you. But soon, okay? I need to get rid of this pit in my stomach when I look at you.

JANE: I'm sure it was the lunch. All that fish covered with flies in the marketplace....

ALEX: Didn't say sex. Although I'd be happy to consider it.

JANE: I already paid for the trip on the boat.

ALEX: You said they won it in a silent auction.

JANE: Well, yeah, but I don't have, I mean, I can't afford to pay for more hotel rooms.

ALEX: I've got money. Courtesy of Animal Planet.

JANE: I'm not going to sleep with you.

ALEX: I'll sleep on the floor and you can have the bed.

JANE: I don't even know you.

ALEX: I promise to get you back to Yangon in time to get your flight back. Look....why not? Take a leap. Who knows what could happen.

(A long beat then:)

JANE: Okay.

ALEX: Wait, really?

JANE: Yeah.

ALEX: I never thought you'd capitulate this easily!

JANE: You have to promise one thing.

ALEX: I won't try to sleep with you if you don't want to.

JANE: No names.

ALEX: Okay.

JANE: We stay off the grid completely.

ALEX: You've got it.

JANE: I must be crazy.

ALEX: Let's get out of here.

JANE: Yeah. We don't want to miss the complimentary cocktail party and happy hour from five to seven.....

THE NEXT DAY - BREAKFAST

JANE: I'll tell you one thing: it was a relief not to have to get up at five to get the boat. This is much nicer. I love the breakfast bar, it has everything. I think I'll start with some cereal and some fresh fruit and then maybe I'll move into an omelet and then finish with dim sum.

ALEX: What did you tell them?

JANE: Who?

ALEX: The boat.

JANE: I ran into an old college friend...

ALEX: In Yangon? They bought that?

JANE: ...so I decided to stay on and I'd catch up with them in Bagan. Have some fresh fruit.

(She forks something and examines it.)

JANE (CONT): I think this really is pear. Not apple pear. Definitely real pear....

ALEX: You didn't want to give them something more open ended?

JANE: Try the fresh baked muffins. Heaven.

ALEX: Now you'll just have to call them again in a few days.

JANE: Coffee?

ALEX: And how do you get hold of a boat in Myanmar? I'm sure they have no reception. And you don't have phone or email-

JANE: Are you having second thoughts about this?

ALEX: Not at all. I just....

JANE: You sounded kind of hysterical there for a minute.

ALEX: Not really. I-

JANE: Like you regret-

ALEX: No-

JANE: Please tell me you're not-

ALEX: I lied.

JANE: Fuck.

ALEX: Sorry.

JANE: About?

ALEX: Animal Planet.

JANE: You don't-

ALEX: No.

JANE: I knew that. Seriously, I knew that. Oh well, I don't care who the fuck you work for. Have some dragon fruit.

ALEX: No, thanks. I don't like how the little seeds get stuck in your teeth.

JANE: Who do you work for?

ALEX: Whom. Bluestone Financial.

JANE: Are they financing the documentary? On the elephants?

ALEX: No documentary. No elephants.

JANE: No elephants?

ALEX: I mean, there are elephants...and they are out of work...but...I'm not

JANE: It was your cover story.

ALEX: When you hear my real story-

JANE: Your real story. Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck, why do I keep-

ALEX: You'll understand-

JANE: I think you'd better tell me! Now! If you're not here for the elephants, what are you here for?

ALEX: A little girl. I'm here to find a little girl.

JANE: Is this some kind of ugly, Myanmarian paternity thing?

ALEX: It's my sister-

JANE: The one who died?

ALEX: Yes. I mean no. I never said she died-

JANE: Yes you did.

ALEX: No I didn't. You just assumed-

JANE: You thought I wasn't listening-

ALEX: I said "we lost her"-

JANE: And then I said how did she die and you said religion or politics-

ALEX: It just seemed easier-

JANE: To lie.

ALEX: Yes.

JANE: Again.

ALEX: Coming from you-

JANE: We're not talking about me-

ALEX: I was gonna tell you later.

JANE: After the boat sailed? After the Mandalay Road was less traveled?

ALEX: Okay, here's the whole thing...

JANE: No leaving things out.

ALEX: I'll start at the beginning.

JANE: I think you'd better.

ALEX: Katie. My little sister. Youngest of seven. Beautiful, smart, charming, but always...off. I'm talking way outside the box. Champion of the downtrodden, wanted to be Joan of Arc, though her efforts always misdirected. Drugs, alcohol, stealing from my parents...Tore their hair out, trying to figure out what to do and failing, always failing. Broke their hearts. Oh, she'd surface now and then begging for money to finance some crazy cause. Happened too many times. And then one day she stumbled upon the ultimate cause, the one that gave her life total meaning: Save the Elephants Dot Org.

JANE: This is where the elephants come in?

ALEX: Right.

JANE: The Myamarian ones?

ALEX: Among others. Nigeria, Kenya, Southeast Asia...
Trip after trip to these places, going on elephant missions, living in Elephant Watch Camps, sleeping with them in tents. Then she met Mr. Saw Paw The and discovered the unemployed elephants of Myanmar. She moved in with his family, became a Mahout-

JANE: What's a Mahout?

ALEX: People who take care of logging elephants. But when the work dried up and Mr. Saw Paw The sold off most of his elephants to Thailand because he couldn't afford to feed them anymore, Katie embraced Buddhism and became a nun.

JANE: Shut up, one of those monkettes in the pink outfits?

ALEX: Yep.

JANE: Here? Now?

ALEX: She moves around a lot but last we heard she was living in a Monastery in Yangon. She's joined an order that took a vow of silence. We've tried to find her, but no one will speak to us or give us any information.

JANE: What about private investigators? Have you thought of that?

ALEX: Of course, but we need someone who speaks the language. And there are hundreds of dialects here: Shan, Karen, Kachin, Mon, various Chin languages-

JANE: Okay, I get it.

ALEX: My mother spends her days in Confession, praying her rosary till the finish has worn off the beads. She keeps the rest of us on the phone for hours, begging to help look. Everyone else has their own families to worry about, but me, with no family of my own, and as the oldest....well, that's why I'm here. To find Katie. For Mom.

(A long beat, then:)

JANE: Wow.

ALEX: Yeah.

JANE: That's why you were so interested in those monkettes yesterday.

ALEX: They go out into the city every day, first to beg for rice then to make daily offerings to Buddha. I thought if I could track them down at one of the temples, look up and down the line, see if one of them is Katie-

JANE: Why not just sit in front of the Monastery until they come out? Like a stakeout. That's what they do on Law and Order. But you might have to pee in a cup.

ALEX: They won't answer the door or speak to you. You can't call, you can't write, you can't linger outside of one of those places or the Military Police will arrest you. Besides, I don't even know if she's there anymore, they move around a lot, go on pilgrimages.

JANE: We're talking real needle in a haystack territory!

ALEX: Yep. All I know is her name is now Aung-it means Sunday born-and she may live in Yangon. Or Bagan. Or Mandalay.

JANE: *(thinking)* Do you have a picture?

ALEX: Just her high school graduation photo. It's the last one we had of her.

(He takes it out of his wallet and shows it to her. Then:)

JANE: What about flyers?

ALEX: Flyers?

JANE: Yeah with this photo on it, both names, we could even photo shop her hair off. And we could probably find a stock photo of a monkette in the pink outfit and photo shop that on her as well. Easier still, we'll just photo shop her face onto that. Then we'll go out to every temple in town and hand out the flyers and see if anyone recognizes her or knows where she is.

ALEX: That's a great idea!

JANE: You never thought of flyers?

ALEX: No. You've really got a knack for this type of thing!

JANE: You're clearly not a detective nor investigative journalist. Or CIA-they'd totally know about flyers. It's like Detective 101.

ALEX: How do you know so much about this kind of stuff?

JANE: I watch a lot of Law and Order. When I can't sleep. Which is most nights. Did you know that at any given moment, in some place in the world, there is an episode of Law and Order playing?

ALEX: I didn't.

JANE: There's a Law and Order episode for every single thing that happens in life.

ALEX: Good to know.

JANE: It's comforting. I watched an episode of SVU last night dubbed in Myanmarian. I've seen every one so I know what happened. Okay, where's your computer?

ALEX: In the room.

JANE: We said no names - Cover up your name at the top of the screen with a band aid or something.

ALEX: I'll just sign in as Guest User.

JANE: Well, come on, we'd better get started.... Hopefully the hotel will let us use their printer.....

(They rise and start to exit.)

JANE (CONT): You do know how to use photo shop?

ALEX: No.

JANE: Jesus....Am I gonna have to do everything?

END OF SAMPLE