

NOT YUGOSLAVIA

A Play for Voices

by  
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CHARACTERS

HIDEYO SUGITA            A Japanese diplomat in  
                                 his 70s. He has an  
                                 American accent.

ASSISTANT                A woman in her 20s.  
                                 Possibly from  
                                 Eastern Europe.

MARK                      A police officer in his  
                                 40s.

SHEILA                    A police officer in  
her                        early 30s.

JAMES                    A bartender in his 20s.

BERNARD HEIDLER        A UN commander in  
                                 Sarajevo.

SCENE 1.

THE SONG 'LYLA' BY  
COCOROSIE IS PLAYING  
IN THE BACKGROUND.

SUGITA: Loopy as it is, I fell for this one.

THE MUSIC IS TURNED UP FOR A  
MOMENT, THEN DOWN AGAIN.

It might cause a splash in distinguished company. Ask them. Why is it that this song, written and performed by some strung-out art students, judging by her voice, the cover, they all spell...

SOMEONE KNOCKS SHARPLY ON THE  
DOOR.

Yes, in a minute! Can't you see I'm busy? I'm at work? Right... So. Why is it that this song is at the top of the playlist every time the fiasco that was Yugoslavia is under scrutiny? Radio, TV, film, you name it. And I mean every time, always. They play this song. It's called 'Lyla', and the band, (SIGHS) CocoRosie.

(SUGITA/CONT'D OVER)

SUGITA: (CONT'D) Gave that brand new assistant of mine - a doll, isn't she? I gave her a task she was really into. I could tell by her face. The closing credits in *Cinema Komunisto* were rolling. Find it out, I said, look it up. The song, who cut it. And get me a copy. I'm a fan, for God's sake! It was quite a task. She made it with flying colours. Such a sweetheart! Anyhow, my question was: Why is it? Why is 'Lyla' the soundtrack to the Balkan Tragedy? Too easy, I know. There isn't a piece of music in the history of mankind that mentions that name, the house of horrors, Yugoslavia, as often as this one. And the catch: 'It's not Yugoslavia!' Some may disagree. (PAUSE) I should say 'a site of human testing' instead of house of horrors. The unfortunate experiment, maybe? No, too scientific... Testing it is, as in 'not tested on animals'. On humans? Hell, yeah! As we saw. I need a drink. I have a bad feeling about this. Should cancel tonight. Stay home, count the Yugoslavias. That's what I ought to do. Show them.

THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

Come in!

THE DOOR IS OPENED, ASSISTANT  
STEPS IN.

ASSISTANT: The cab's 'ere.

SUGITA: It is?

ASSISTANT: Ready to go. When you are, sir.

SUGITA: You are?

ASSISTANT: I beg your pardon?

SUGITA: Sorry. Ready to go. See? I'm talking to myself again! Seeing you standing there, in all your charms, well, I realize I've been doing that way too much lately. Talking to myself, that is, spending days, weeks alone with my choices - in life, in politics. Hell. Authorize an airstrike, or not? There are lives on the line when you're making that decision. Not to mention the reputation of, of..

ASSISTANT: (MECHANICALLY) I'm sure you did the right thing, sir.

SUGITA: (DISAPPOINTED) You think so?

ASSISTANT: No, sir. I'm positive. You did, sir, absolutely, the right thi...

SUGITA: (INTERRUPTS) I need to get out more. Need to mingle. You know what that means, mingling?

ASSISTANT: What the lecture is for, isn't it?

SUGITA: To me it means a heap of abuse.

ASSISTANT: Abuse, sir?

SUGITA: Yes, girl.

ASSISTANT: Um, why?

SUGITA: Maybe I'll tell you when I get back. All right? If I do.

SUGITA GIVES A SHORT LAUGH. HE  
SLAPS HIS THIGHS.

Well. It's off to the gallows,  
then!

SUGITA GETS UP. STEPS ON WOODEN  
FLOORBOARDS, SHUFFLING OF  
CLOTH: SUGITA PUTS HIS OVERCOAT  
ON. ASSISTANT HANDS HIM HIS  
BRIEFCASE.

ASSISTANT: Have a good one, sir. I mean, break a leg, sir.

SUGITA: Why don't you wish me luck? I mean I could use it, you know. Today, and all.

ASSISTANT: (HESITATING) Good luck, sir.

SUGITA: Bye, doll.

SUGITA RUNS DOWN THE STAIRS. HE  
OPENS THE FRONT DOOR, GOES OUT.  
IT IS RAINING. HE CLOSES THE  
FRONT DOOR.

SUGITA: (CLOSE) The time and the place,  
they'll do it here. We've seen it a  
million times. 'Gunned down when he  
was leaving home... outside his  
flat.' Maybe if I stood, stood here  
in defiance! They'd get their hands  
out of their pockets, their boss,  
his head out of his ass, and...

THE DOOR OPENS.

ASSISTANT: Umbrella, sir. It's pouring.

SUGITA: (IN LOVE) It is. It is!

ASSISTANT: Yeah. You need to open it.

SUGITA: Open?

ASSISTANT: The umbrella, sir, I just gave you.  
In your hand. (SMILING) Open it.  
Please. You'll catch your death.

SUGITA: Catching a cab? No way! It takes a  
little more than rain to kill me.  
By God, I'll fight dragons with  
this sword the princess so kindly  
gave me! (WAVING THE UMBRELLA)  
Whatever you've got, I say, 'Bring  
it on!'

ASSISTANT: Goodnight, sir.

SUGITA: Going home, are you?

ASSISTANT: (PAUSE) I can stay, if you need me.

SUGITA: You can? Swell! I'll bring you a dragon head for dinner. See you in a bit!

ASSISTANT: See you.

SUGITA RUNS DOWN THE STEPS. A  
CAR DOOR IS OPENED AND CLOSED.  
THE CAB PULLS AWAY.

Bastard.

SCENE 2.

ASSISTANT IS AT THE COMPUTER,  
LISTENING TO RECORDINGS SUGITA  
HAS MADE. HIS VOICE IS SLIGHTLY  
DISTORTED (D) BY THE AUDIO  
SYSTEM.

SUGITA: (D) In the thick of it, we had six safe areas. Six! God is my witness. One was Sarajevo. Two, three, four... crawling on the kitchen floor.

ON THE AUDIO, SUGITA TAKES A  
DRINK.

(SUGITA/CONT'D OVER)



SUGITA: (CONT'D) I need a nap. A nap and a map... of Texas.

ASSISTANT: Souse.

ASSISTANT SKIPS PART OF THE  
AUDIO FILE. SHE CLICKS 'PLAY'.

SUGITA: (D) ... the so-called Bihać pocket. There were elements there, who strove for peace, honestly did, while the double-dealing Sarajevo government wouldn't give them the time of a...

ASSISTANT STOPS THE FILE.

ASSISTANT: My ass strove for peace. It honestly did.

SHE CLICKS 'FFWD', THEN 'PLAY'.  
ON THE AUDIO FILE, 'LYLA' BY  
COCOROSIE IS AGAIN PLAYING IN  
THE BACKGROUND. SUGITA IS  
SLURRING HIS WORDS.

SUGITA: (D) Take a look. Look at these people. I mean, Look... at the... fool.

CUT TO: THE DINNER PARTY WHERE  
SUGITA IS GIVING A SPEECH. HIS  
VOICE IS LOUDER AND MORE  
CONFIDENT THAN BEFORE. HIS  
VOICE HAS AN ECHO TO IT, THANKS  
TO THE P.A. SYSTEM. SUBDUED  
CHATTER, SOUNDS OF CUTLERY ARE  
HEARD IN THE BACKGROUND.

SUGITA: (D) There were elements within the Muslim community that didn't agree with their government. In the northwestern corner of Bosnia, here, there's a place that came to be known as the Bihać pocket. It was completely surrounded by the Serbs. And... you've heard of it? Grand! Then I won't have to explain every turn in history since darn 1933. To you. To the others, alas, I still do. Or maybe you'll do it for me, eh? Explain everything? Why not?

POLITE LAUGHTER IN THE  
BACKGROUND. SUGITA'S VOICE  
BECOMES MORE INTIMATE.

What's your name? C'mon, don't be shy. Speak up. This is not a trap.

MORE LAUGHTER.

Your name, please.

MARK: Mark. My name is Mark.

SUGITA: Good for you! And your lovely wife, her name is?

SHEILA: I'm not his wife.

LAUGHTER.