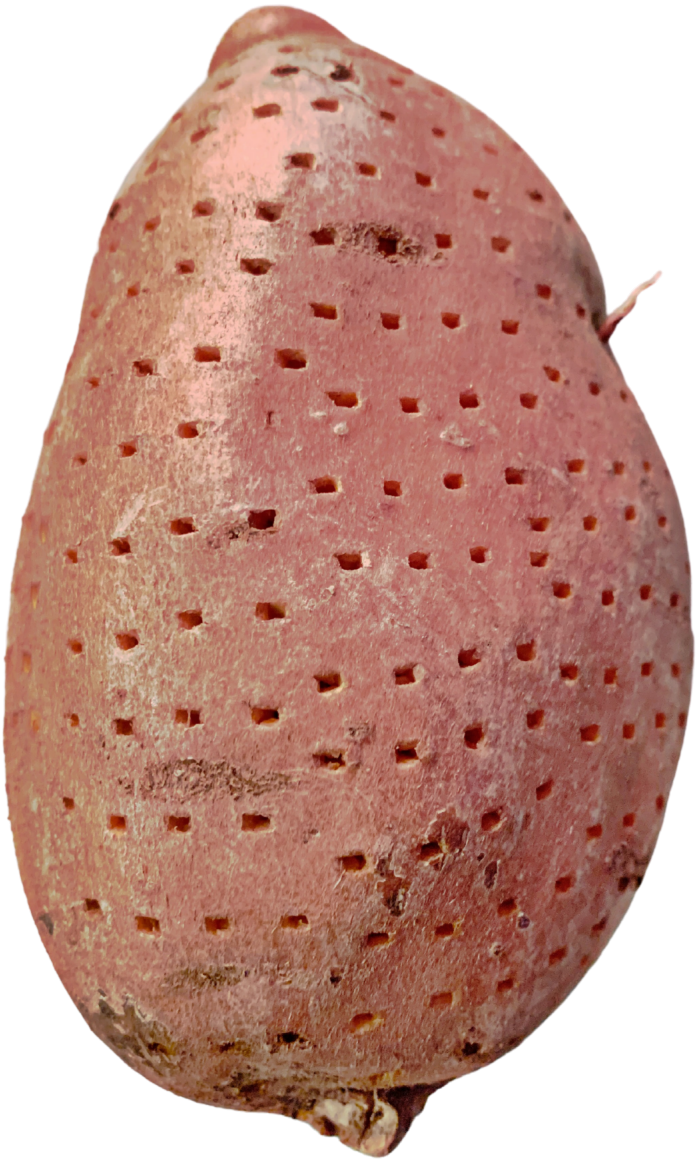
BACON SAUSAGE
VEGGIE NOODLES



Characters? None of the characters in this play are fully humans, even the ones that are human aren't actually human, so they shouldn't be cared for as if they were, you know, human. The more appropriate way to care for them, if they should in fact be cared for at all, would be to care for them like they were free hard candies on a receptionist's countertop, or a scab on your thigh that's grown weirdly thick. In other words, they are closer to blob than human—multicolor blobs or thin sacs with poorly sewn seams. They don't really have any true purpose or desire or reason to be. They are, however, vaguely concerned and easily distracted. They have little quirks. They overthink and underthink. They are small, confused and unimportant.

Spheres? I suppose this play can be divided into 4 sphere-like worlds.
Sphere 1: A "Very Vintage Cantonese-Style" "Diner". A place where you can go and try and remember to feeling of being and eating in a Cantonese Diner. It doesn't serve food but it is decorated with a lot of "vintage photographs" and "photo" "albums" and "well-paid" "cooks" "cooking" "food". A hip hang out spot, and by hip, I mean the hip bone.
Sphere 2: Four Little Mages afflicted with mysterious tumors must traverse an endless desert, on a quest to spend a night at the Infinite Sweet Potato Hotel.
Sphere 3: The Government is filming a new live-action Mulan! Another one?! Exciting! What an opportunity! Open-call auditions. See you there!
Sphere 4: The mostly abandoned sidewalks and underpasses in the downtown square of Gangrene Foot City. Someone needs to stimulate that blood flow.

Year? The year is 5354. Also known as Year Not Alive But At Least It is Year Not Dead.
Not actually 3333 years in the future. It's more like a code. Or something resembling what could have once been a code.

Note on the Language: The language spoken by the characters in this play is broken. A mix of broken Cantonese and broken English. In an adjacent world, they might default to speaking only in Cantonese, but in this world, they have already forgotten too much of it to use it exclusively, and well, the English helps you understand them better anyway. And they are desperate for you to understand them.

"What does it mean to love a culture, and take pride in it, but not the government that serves as its most prominent booster?"

— Te-Ping Chan, The Wall Street Journal

"Dishonor on you, dishonor on your cow"

— *Mushu, from Disney's 1998 animation film version of Mulan.*

A “Very Vintage Cantonese-Style” “Diner”.
One of many in the downtown square of Gangrene Foot City.
5 “humans” gather around medicine-blue, plastic furniture.
3 of the 5 “humans” have little sticks. The names of the humans refer directly to the kind of little stick they possess. The 3 with the little sticks each have their own special little repeated action.
It’s like a tick, or a bad habit no longer worth shaking.
Their repeated action is their default state of being, and difficult to disrupt.
Action A: HALF CHOPSTICK stirs one chopstick around the interior of a burnt, crusty wok.
Action B: TOOTHPICK pushes a toothpick up up and up into her eyelid.
Action C: LITTLE FORK punches rows and rows of tiny, square holes into the skin of a sweet potato with a little fork, the kind of little fork used for eating crabs.

TOOTHPICK
Pls pls pls
pls pls
pleeeeeeeeeese just work

HALF CHOPSTICK
Quiet, please, I’m cooking here?

LITTLE FORK
No, you’re not

HALF CHOPSTICK
What does it look like I’m doing?

LITTLE FORK
dunno. do you kno?

TOOTHPICK
pls pls pls
pls pls pls pls pls
pls
pls pls pls
pls pls
pls pls pls pls
pls pls pls
pls pls pls
pls pls
pls pls

HALF CHOPSTICK
I—I’m...Whatever. You’re gunna poke your eye out with that toothpick

TOOTHPICK
I wouldn’t if it would Just Do Its Job

HALF-CHOPSTICK
What are you trying to do.

TOOTHPICK
I’m trying to be a pretty girl

LITTLE FORK
But you ARE a pretty girl

TOOTHPICK
SHUT UP PERV

LITTLE FORK
Okay

TOOTHPICK
Just keep doing whatever the hell you're doing and shut the fuck up

LITTLE FORK
I'm making a Sweet Potato Hotel, look.

TOOTHPICK
Can't look.

LITTLE FORK
[holds up a sweet potato riddled with tiny holes]
The shape of the holes poked out by the fork prongs are each perfectly square.
Don't they kinda look like little windows, look. So many windows, so many rooms.
Seems like my hotel might never run out of rooms, look.
Infinite rooms.

TOOTHPICK
I can't look right now, if you haven't noticed, there's a toothpick in my eyelid

LITTLE FORK
Okay

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Sweet Potato Hotel.

LITTLE FORK
[holds up the sweet potato again]
Look at the little square windows

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Sounds like it could be the name of a band.

LITTLE FORK
Band? Band.
Like a rubber band?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
No, not like a rubber band.
More like—

LITTLE FORK
Like a rubber band named Sweet Potato Hotel?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
No, more like, more like a band related to music.

TOOTHPICK
Ha.

LITTLE FORK
What do you know about music.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Two words. John. Lennon.

LITTLE FORK
That's 4 words
[Counting his fingers]
Two-Words-John-Lennon. Four words. Five Syllables.

BOYFRIEND
John Lennon? Like the walls with the blank post-it notes stuck on them?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Before John Lennon was many walls, he was A Man.

LITTLE FORK
A Man?

TOOTHPICK
A Man?

BOYFRIEND
A Man?

GIRLFIREND
A Man?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
[nodding somberly]
A Man.

[LOOOOOONG PAUSE]

LITTLE FORK
That's sounds fake.

BOYFRIEND
Hi.

GIRLFRIEND
What.

BOYFRIEND
Hi.

GIRLFRIEND
Did you just call me a cunt.

BOYFRIEND
What.

TOOTHPICK
Dude you just called your girlfriend a cunt, you dick.

BOYFRIEND
What. Hi?

GIRLFRIEND
Vagina?

BOYFRIEND
Hi?

GIRLFRIEND
Pussy?!

BOYFIREND
What are you saying

GIRLFRIEND
What are you saying.

BOYFRIEND
I was just saying hi

GIRLFRIEND
Hi?

BOYFRIEND
Hi to our friends, in this “diner”?

GIRLFRIEND
Oh.

BOYFRIEND
Hi

LITTLE FORK
Hello.

GIRLFRIEND
You want bj?

BOYFRIEND
Yea.

GIRLFIREND
I’ll clock that.

BOYFIREND
Thanks.

[TOOTHPICK takes the toothpick out of the her eyelid]

TOOTHPICK
[blink]
[blink blink]
Is it working?
[blink]
[blink]
This is how my mom did it. Right? And most other girls too.
Does anyone else remember?
She had the ugly eyes like me but then used a toothpick to poke out the extra crease to get the pretty eyes. Poked her eyelids in school, after school, before school.
Isn't that what she said?
[blink blink]
How long did she say it took her for the eyelid crease to stay?
[blink]
2 years? Oh god that's too long.
[blink]
She used a Toothpick right?
[blink]
Or did she use some other little stick.
[blink blink blink blink]
Can one of you bitches please tell me if this is working!! !
[blink]

LITTLE FORK
Not looking, don't wanna be a perv.

TOOTHPICK
Look AT ME, PERV

GIRLFIREND
[Looks]
It's not working. As soon as you blink, your eyelid reverts into being one flat, fat sheet of skin.

TOOTHPICK
FUCK.
FUCK UR MOM.

GIRLFRIEND
Hey fuck UR MOM

TOOTHPICK
Fuck U and UR MOM'S STINKY CUNT

GIRLFRIEND
HEY

TOOTHPICK
Just saying hi.

[TOOTHPICK returns to her little action]

GIRLFRIEND *[to BOYFRIEND]*
You see what you started?

BOYFRIEND
What. Sorry. What?

GIRLFRIEND
You see what you started?!

BOYFRIEND
But like. Can someone tell me. What Is Paper Used For?? ???

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Music.

GIRLFRIEND
Walls.

BOYFRIEND
Doesn't sound right.

LITTLE FORK
STAB STAB STAB STAB

BOYFRIEND
Hi?

GIRLFRIEND
Stop

BOYFRIEND
Hi? Hi. Hi? Hi!
Hihihihihihihihihihihi

GIRLFRIEND
Stop calling me that.

BOYFRIEND
I feel like I'm going crazy.
??? Hi ???
Hihi?
Hi?

Hi

GIRLFRIEND
Stop, I'm serious
Seriously

Stop

GIRLFRIEND
STOP.

BOYFRIEND
But
What
Is
PAPER
Used
For??????????!!

TOOTHPICK
I bet Mulan had double eyelids.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Which Mulan.

TOOTHPICK
All of the Mulans. Every single Mulan.

BOYFRIEND
Does anyone know what are we doing here?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
I'm cooking

LITTLE FORK
Keep telling yourself that.

BOYFRIEND
But why are there so many little sticks everywhere?

LITTLE FORK
Oi don't question the little sticks.

GIRLFRIEND
Yeah don't do that.

BOYFRIEND
But—

TOOTHPICK
No. Shut Up.

BOYFRIEND
But. But why when I think about the numbers 4 and 8 and half of the sounds that makes up "maternal grandma", my brains tells me I'm thinking about a dead bitch?

GIRLFRIEND
Four plus Eight plus Half-Grandma equals Dead Bitch?

BOYFRIEND
Like why does that total make sense to me?

LITTLE FORK
You need to get yourself your own little stick, bro.
Get your mind off those tricksy numbers.

[pause]

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Bacon.
Baconnnnn.
Bacooooonnnnnnn

TOOTHPICK
Sausage.

LITTLE FORK
Bacon
Sausage
Veggie
Noodles.

GIRLFRIEND
Bacon Sausage.

BOYFRIEND
Veggie Noodles

GIRLFRIEND
Veggie Noodles

BOYFRIEND
Bacon Sausage

HALF-CHOPSTICK
The other way around sounds better.

GIRLFRIEND
Bacon Sausage

BOYFRIEND
Veggie Noodles?

GIRLFRIEND	BOYFRIEND
Bacon Sausage	Veggie Noodles
Bacon Sausage	Veggie Noodles
Bacon Sausage	Veggie Noodles
Bacon Sausage	Veggie Noodles

[pause]

LITTLE FORK
What does that mean?

GIRLFRIEND
It used to mean something. Maybe something dangerous?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
It's a food. Foods can be dangerous.

TOOTHPICK
Shut up, it's not a food.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Bacon Sausage.

BOYFRIEND
Veggie Noodles.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Those are all foods.
Bacon Sausage Veggie Noodles. Four foods. Seven syllables.

TOOTHPICK
So?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
We're in a diner. It makes sense that we're talking about food.

LITTLE FORK
We're not in a diner, we're in a "Diner".
We don't eat stuff at "Diners", we look at stuff.

TOOTHPICK
As in not a Real Diner

BOYFRIEND
What is a Real Diner.

LITTLE FORK
Dunno. People talked maybe.
Had conversations that went in a straight lines.

GIRLFRIEND
That makes zero sense.

TOOTHPICK
In real Diners, people used to dine.

GIRLFRIEND
On each other?!?!

TOOTHPICK
stupid bitch.

BOYFRIEND
Can someone please explain the little sticks

TOOTHPICK
The little sticks are useful.

LITTLE FORK
They have uses.

BOYFRIEND
Like what

HALF CHOPSTICK
Put your faith in the little sicks.

[pause]

GIRLFRIEND
[looks out]
It's raining.

BOYFRIEND
[looks out]

LITTLE FORK
[looks out]

TOOTHPICK
[looks out]

HALF-CHOPSTICK
[looks out]
No.

That's not rain.

That's just water falling from the sky.

A desert of seemingly endless yellow. 4 little mages walk.
MAGE7 MAGE1 MAGE2 MAGE0.
Many tumors in various muted tones hang like leeches, or half-sucked gumballs, off their limbs and cheeks. The tumors bob up and down, almost skipping, keeping pace with the beat of the steps.
The mages wear silky robes, pointy hats, and hold cute little wands.
Maybe we don't see their faces.

MAGE7
But how can we be sure there will be room for us.

MAGE1
How many times are we going to have to go over this

MAGE2
It's an infinite hotel so it has an infinite number of rooms

MAGE0
But it's also a sweet potato

MAGE7
Right

MAGE1
According to what we've heard.

MAGE2
The hotel?

MAGE0
No, the sweet potato.

MAGE7
Which is also a hotel

MAGE1
We've been over this

MAGE2
There's no harm in making sure

MAGE0
The Infinite Sweet Potato Hotel

MAGE7
Where there are never any vacancies but there's always room for more.

MAGE1
That's a good slogan

MAGE2
Oh yeah.

MAGE0
But how can we be sure there will be room for us.

MAGE7
How many times so I have to explain this to you.

MAGE1
But it's a paradox, right?

MAGE2
Yeah so?

MAGE0
A paradox is something that is seemingly absurd or self-contradictory

MAGE7
Until further investigation proves it may actually be well founded and true.

MAGE1
Yeah so?

MAGE2
Has the investigation we've done so far been far enough?

MAGE0
I mean...

MAGE7
I just want to make sure we've gone far enough.

MAGE1
How do we know?

MAGE2
Is there a way to tell?

MAGE0
If we've sufficiently exhausted our ourselves enough

MAGE7
To establish beyond reasonable doubt that the Sweet Potato Hotel has infinite rooms

MAGE1
Even though a hotel containing an infinite number of rooms sounds impossible

MAGE2
Have we done enough to ensure that there will be room for us when we arrive?

MAGE0
How do we identify the point at which we've done enough to overcome absurdity?

MAGE7
Maybe a pointy thing will fall from the sky when we've done enough?

MAGE1
No Magic! The law says No Magic!

MAGE2
Calm down, I'm talking about a non-descript pointy thing, not magic

MAGE0
Yeah look around, nothing's on fire.

MAGE7
Our hats are pointy

MAGE1
FUCK I'm ANXIOUS

MAGE2
Okay fine let's go over this again

MAGE0
No Magic!

MAGE7
What are you even saying, nothing's on fire!

MAGE1
This is just math, not magic

MAGE2
Just math

MAGE0
Not magic

MAGE7
Right okay so we're in the clear

MAGE1
Let's start from the top

MAGE2
Scenario Number One

MAGE0
At the Infinite Sweet Potato Hotel

MAGE7
Where the beds are potato and the windows are made from fork

MAGE1
All the rooms are always occupied

MAGE2
That's the problem.

MAGE0
But one night a weary Traveler who has travelled an infinite distance

MAGE7
And who has never done anything wrong in his life

MAGE1
Arrives at the Infinite Sweet Potato Hotel and asks the tireless Hotel Clerk

MAGE2
Who works there 24/7

MAGE0
For a reasonable salary

MAGE7
For a room

MAGE1
Right...

MAGE2
Wait

MAGE0
Where were we?

MAGE7
The um the Hotel Clerk who is content with his life

MAGE1
No, the exemplary Traveler approaches the content Hotel Clerk for a room

MAGE2
But all the rooms are occupied

MAGE0
We KNOW ALL THIS ALREADY

MAGE7
Calm. Down.

MAGE1
Keep going don't slow down

MAGE2
Okay so not wanting to turn away the weary Traveler who has never done anything wrong

MAGE0
Which makes him absolutely deserving of a room

MAGE7
And rest

MAGE1
And modest amenities

MAGE2
So what does the Hotel Clerk do?

MAGE0
He asks the Guest in Room 1 to move to Room 2

MAGE7
And the Guest in Room 2 to move to Room 3

MAGE1
And the Guest in Room 3 to move to Room 4

MAGE2
And the Guest in Room 4 to move to Room 5

MAGE0
And so on and so forth

MAGE7
And since there are an infinite number of rooms

MAGE1
There is a new room for each existing guest

MAGE7
Thus leaving Room 1 open for the weary traveler

MAGE1
Every guest moves from room number “n”

MAGE2
To room number “n+1”

MAGE0
Easy, this one’s easy.

MAGE7
And this formula will work for any finite number of new guests

MAGE1
Which is us

MAGE2
“Which is us” is not a number

MAGE1
OBVIOUSLY I meant FOUR, moron

MAGE7
Concentrate, this is important

MAGE1
So if 4 new guests

MAGE2
Which is us

MAGE0
Moron

MAGE7
IF 4 NEW GUESTS

MAGE1
Arrived at the Sweet Potato Hotel

MAGE2
The Hotel Clerk would simply have to ask each existing guest

MAGE0
To move from room “n”

MAGE7
To room “n+4”

MAGE1
Opening up the first 4 rooms

MAGE2
One for each of us!

MAGE0
We could share one room honestly, let’s not be greedy

MAGE7
No, no way, we are not sharing rooms, wait are we being greedy?

MAGE1
I don’t think we’re being greedy, why would you think that

MAGE2
Wait are we being greedy?

MAGE0
Why would wanting one room for each of us be greedy?

MAGE7
Seems like a reasonable desire to not be cramped all together in one room right?

MAGE1
But that’s not the point

MAGE2
The point is we COULD make do with one room

MAGE0
The point?! Did we just find the point?!

MAGE7
No that’s a different point from the point we’re looking for

MAGE1
Can we please focus

MAGE2
Yeah guys scenario 2 is a lot more complicated here we go

MAGE0
What happens if an infinite number of weary travelers

MAGE7
Countably infinite

MAGE1
That's key info

MAGE2
Okay so a countably infinite number of weary travelers arrive at the Sweet Potato Hotel

MAGE0
Are they all without sin?

MAGE7
We have to just assume that for now, okay?

MAGE1
It's the only way forward

MAGE2
For now

MAGE0
So where were we?

MAGE7
A countably infinite number of weary travelers

MAGE1
Who are all infinitely without sin and therefore infinitely deserving of rooms

MAGE2
Arrive at the Infinite Sweet Potato Hotel

MAGE0
Asking for rooms

MAGE7
I know this I know the answer to this

MAGE1
You move each existing Guest by

MAGE2
Multiplying each existing room number by itself two times

MAGE0
"n" times "n"?

MAGE7
So that each new room number has to be even

MAGE1
Right...

MAGE2
Right?

MAGE0
No that's not right

MAGE7
No because 3 times 3 is 9 and that's odd

MAGE1
That is odd

MAGE2
Odd as in that's 5 or odd as in like woah that's weird

MAGE0
Wait wait wait wait wait wait

MAGE7
It's times 2

MAGE1
Times 2?

MAGE2
No, it's not "it" times 2 it's "n" times 2

MAGE0
Say that again?

MAGE2
No, it's not "IT" times 2 it's "N" times 2

MAGE0
Say that again but differently?

MAGE7
Any room number "n" times 2 is "2n" and so that has to be even

MAGE1
Yeah yeah yeah yeah

MAGE2
Right because 3 times 2 is 6

MAGE0
And that's even

MAGE7
Each current guest moves from room number "n" to room number "2n"

MAGE1
2 times 2 times 2 times 2

MAGE2
UGH I CAN'T FOCUS

MAGE0
Come on little dudes we're so close

MAGE7
All the current guests are now moved to a room with an even number

MAGE1
Leaving an infinite number of odd numbered rooms open

MAGE2
For the new guests

MAGE7
Who are infinitely perfect in every single possible way

MAGE1
No doubt about it

MAGE2
And they all lived there

MAGE0
Comfortably and for a reasonable amount of time.

[...did they do it?]

MAGE7
We did it.

MAGE1
We examined every single possibility

MAGE2
And the paradox

MAGE0
Holds true

MAGE7
We did the work

MAGE1
And it FEELS like we did the work

MAGE2
A feeling that can only be felt if we've done the work

MAGE0
We're good

MAGE7
We're sure

MAGE1
We're okay

MAGE2
We're on our way

[A collective sigh of relief. The MAGES walk]

MAGE0
But guys

MAGE7
No

MAGE1
But

MAGE2
Don't say it

MAGE0
But

MAGE7
I am literally LITERALLY gonna set your organs on fire

MAGE1
No you can't

MAGE2
You're low on man

MAGE0
Law says No Magic!

MAGE7
If you burn, the law will burn with US!

MAGE1
Is that from the hunger games?

MAGE2
By the FIRE OF THE BLAZING SUN—

[MAGE7 brandishes his little wand in the air than points it at MAGE0]

MAGE0
I'm just trying to point out what if an
Infinite number of weary travelers
And there's no way of knowing they are
All without sin? How does the Hotel
Clerk make room??! Are those
travelers still deserving of room under these
new circumstances? And what about
What about negative numbers?
What about the square root of 2?
What about PI the mathematical constant
And PIE the BUTTERY PASTRY?!?!

MAGE7
Felo'melorn! Flamestrike!
Flamestrike! Flamestrike!
Felomin Asha!!! Flamestrike!
Anar'ranel Belore!
I AM A LIVING BOMB!
LIVING FUCKING BOMB!
FIREBALL! FIREBALL!
Behold the Phoenix God!
Burn in the plumes of Al'ar!
Felo'melorn! Flamestrike!
Flamestrike! FUCKFUCK

MAGE1
ow

[No organs on fire, but MAGE1 topples into the sand.
The other MAGES follow, and topple over like dominoes]

MAGE2
ow

MAGE0
ow

MAGE7
ow

MAGE1
See

MAGE2
Told you

MAGE0
Low on mana

MAGE7
These tumors are sucking out all our life force

MAGE1
Not a lot left anyway ha-ha sorry tumors

MAGE2
Let's just keep ignoring the tumors

MAGE0
Yeah that's what we decided earlier so why are we bringing them up again.

MAGE7
I'm tired

MAGE1
Get up

MAGE2
I'm dying.

MAGE0
Get up.

[Slowly, the MAGES get up. It's taxing for them.
By the time they get on their feet, they are winded.]

MAGE7
Let's keep going.

[The MAGES start walking again, a little slower than before]

MAGE1
Are we even going the right way

MAGE2
We have to be

MAGE0
Oh I can't wait to get there

MAGE7
Is it greedy to be looking forward to it?

MAGE1
”It” as in comfort and privacy?

MAGE2
Yeah is “it” greedy?

MAGE0
I’m not sure

MAGE7
Yeah that’s a moral gray area for sure

MAGE1
Do you think the Infinite Sweet Potato Hotel will have an Infinite Breakfast Buffet?

MAGE2
Oh for sure

MAGE0
They have to have one.

MAGE7
Wouldn’t make sense otherwise.

[The MAGES keep walking]

The GOVERNMENT is a big conglomerate blob of four smaller blobs.
The GOVERNMENT is on a nation-wide search for an undiscovered actress to play the lead role of Mulan in their newest live-action movie, Mulan. It's been a very long audition day.
The GOVERNMENT is tired and grumpy and needs a snack.
TOOTHPICK is very excited and nervous for this once in a lifetime opportunity.

TOOTHPICK
Look at me, I may never pass for a perfect bride, or a perfect daughter—

GOVERNMENT
Why not.

TOOTHPICK
Oh! Um.

GOVERNMENT
What's wrong with you.

TOOTHPICK
Nothing!

GOVERNMENT
Then why couldn't you pass as a perfect bride, or a perfect daughter

TOOTHPICK
Oh. No, uhm—

GOVERNMENT
If you're selected as the lead for our movie, we would like to think that the masses could envision you as a perfect bride, or perfect daughter, for their family unit.

TOOTHPICK
No you're right you are absolutely right!

GOVERNMENT
Mulan, in her very essence, is a perfect bride and perfect daughter.
The driving force behind the many box office successes that we would like to repeat.

TOOTHPICK
Oh TOTALLY, I TOTALLY agree, couldn't agree more.

GOVERNMENT
Okay so then why did you just say that.

TOOTHPICK
That was just lyrics from the original animated song. So uh I thought it would be like kind of cute and nostalgic to use it for my audition but—

GOVERNMENT
Hm. Nostalgia. Nostalgia can be a very powerful weapon. Often lethal.

TOOTHPICK
I totally agree.

GOVERNMENT
But there is nothing nostalgic about being an undesirable spinster.

TOOTHPICK
I think... I think I can be desirable.

GOVERNMNET
You do?

TOOTHPICK
Yes. I really do.

GOVERNMENT
Well then. Let us check.

TOOTHPICK
Yes?

GOVERNMENT
Come here, come closer to us.

TOOTHPICK
Why.

GOVERNMENT
We want to see your face.

TOOTHPICK
Can't you see it from here.

GOVERNMENT *[synchronized squint]*
What are you hiding.

TOOTHPICK
Government, I'm an open book

GOVERNMENT *[hissing, like Voldemort]]*
Than C o m e c l o ssss e rrrr

[TOOTHPICK takes one step toward GOVERNMENT]

TOOTHPICK
Is this close enough?

GOVERNMENT
Closer.

[TOOTHPICK takes one more step]

TOOTHPICK
Is this close enough?

GOVERNEMNT
Closer.

[TOOTHPICK takes one more step]

TOOTHPICK
This feels pretty close already actually.

GOVERNMENT
Closer.

TOOTHPICK *[bracing herself]*
okay

[TOOTHPICK is now standing so close to GOVERNMENT, they could touch tongues if they wanted. There is lots of T~E~N~S~I~O~N]

GOVERNMENT
[Active recoil]
FUCK. EW. WHAT THE HELL

TOOTHPICK
[wince]
I'm sorry

GOVERNMENT
Are we some sort of joke to you?!

TOOTHPICK
I'm sorry!!! ! !

GOVERNMENT
Are you trying to make a mockery of Your Government?

TOOTHPICK
I would never, I swear!
Oh god. I've been trying so hard.
I'm so sorry.

GOVERNMENT
You have MONOLIDS—

TOOTHPICK
I know

GOVERNMENT
—and STILL decided to come AUDITION for MULAN!?!?

TOOTHPICK *[holding back tears]*
I just really
[sniffle]
Really wanted a shot. I feel like—

GOVERNMENT
Well THANK YOU for WASTING our TIME. GoodBYE.

TOOTHPICK
—I feel like I can act well.

GOVERNMENT
My GOD, that is SO irrelevant.
Do you not know who we are. Let us remind you.
That glorious year, many years ago, when we hosted the biggest sporting event known to man.
Naturally, we needed a little girl to sing an ode to the motherland.
A singing little girl is a must-have at any global event. It is a surefire crowd-pleaser.
And there was this little girl, she had a ringing voice, a perfect voice, the voice we wanted—
But her heavy cheeks and crooked teeth were a direct threat to our international image.
So what did we do?
We replaced her with another little girl, a little girl with a perfect face, the face we wanted.
Slender, pointy chin. Crescent moon double-lidded eyes. We placed the girl with the perfect face on a stage in the very center of the world where she lip-synced to that perfect voice ringing unseen from underneath the ground.
In that moment, we got everything we wanted, and It Was Perfect.
That is who we are.
This is the image of our moral fiber.
We are the Government.

TOOTHPICK
I know. I'm so sorry. I'm so stupid. You're so beautiful

[With great emotion. TOOTHPICK smashes her lips into all four lips of GOVERNMENT.]

GOVERNMENT
Oh. Uh. What are you doing.

TOOTHPICK
That was just the most beautiful story I've ever heard. I couldn't help myself.

GOVERNMENT
You really think so?

TOOTHPICK
I really really do.

[The GOVERNMENT leans in for more kisses. A wet make out session with the government.]

GOVERNMENT *[Between tears and wet kissing]*
We may not know a lot of things.

TOOTHPICK
Don't say that. You know all the things.

GOVERNMENT
But we know what we want the common people to want.

TOOTHPICK
An inspiring movie. An amazing movie that inspires and fills the world with glorious light.

GOVERNMENT
We just want people to like it. And be proud of us for making it.

TOOTHPICK
I'm proud of you.

GOVERNMENT
We are having so many issues in the writer's room.
Who is the Mulan of this moment?
What is she trying to say?

TOOTHPICK
What if...at the end, after defeating the evil Huns, instead of going back to her family like some unambitious fuck, she instead accepts a middle management position in the emperor's court?

GOVERNEMTN
My god. That is...THAT is inspired!
That is the perfect ending. Your Government wants to make out with you some more.

TOOTHPICK
Your Mulan obliges.

[TOOTHPICK and GOVERNMENT make out with insane intensity. Suddenly, GOVERNMENT pulls back]

GOVERNMENT
Did you just say, " Your Mulan"?

TOOTHPICK
I'm sorry it just slipped out.

GOVERNMENT
You have monolids.

TOOTHPICK
I know

GOVERNMENT
Mulan cannot have monolids

TOOTHPICK
I know

GOVERNMENT
If Mulan has monolids, then this would have all been for nothing.

TOOTHPICK
Mulan is a Double-Eyelid gal for sure.

GOVERNMENT
Yes. That is our creative vision.
Mulan is a Warrior, a Bride, a Sex Object, a Role Model and a Double-Eyelid Gal.

TOOTHPICK
I'll see myself out.

[TOOTHPICK turns around to leave—]

GOVERNMENT
Hold on—

TOOTHPICK *[wheels around]*
Yes?

GOVERNMENT
Thank you for the support, and the making out.

TOOTHPICK
You're welcome.

GOVERNMENT
Art is hard.

TOOTHPICK
Art is SO hard!

GOVERNMENT
Hm. Can we ask you a question?

TOOTHPICK
For sure.

GOVERNENT
Do you feel connected to the common people?

TOOTHPICK
Not at all.

GOVERNMENT
Good, good.

TOOTHPICK
But I do feel like a deep need in my heart to inspire them.

GOVERNMENT
Wow. That is almost a perfect answer.

TOOTHPICK
Thank you.

GOVERNMENT
You could be—

TOOTHPICK
Listen—

GOVERNMENT
We don't know. Shit. Maybe? But there is just no way to overcome the wretched Monolid.
There used to be the option for surgery. But we killed every surgeon decades ago. Goddamn.

TOOTHPICK
Listen. Shh. Who needs those dead surgeons. Fuck'em. They're dead.
Look at me. I may not pass as the Perfect Mulan right now, but isn't that the whole point?
Growing up, Mulan was my role model. My one and only.
She was something unattainable.
That level of perfection is something you could waste your whole life chasing,
Don't you see? I'm standing here today, in front of you, as a Government Success Story.
I bought the story you sold. I've let it consume me. I've let it destroy me.
I will do anything to be the next Government-Sanctioned Live-Action Mulan.
To be the Mulan that ugly, small-eyed girls all across this great nation will look up to.
She'll see me on the movie posters and think to herself...Man, I wish I had big eyes too.
BAM! That's it! That's all she'll ever be able to concentrate on for the rest of her life.
She becomes your servant.
A distortion of your image of perfection that would do anything to become THE REFLECTION.
I know this is the truth because it happened to me.
Give me another chance.
Next time I see you. I will have Big, Beautiful, Double-Lidded Eyes and I—
I will bring honor to us all.

GOVERNMENT
You have one week.

GIRLFRIEND and BOYFRIEND walk on poorly lit sidewalk in downtown Gangrene Foot City. They're on a date.

GIRLFRIEND
This is cute.

BOYFRIEND
Yes, I agree

GIRLFRIEND
If someone else saw us right now, they'd probz think, "Wow, they're so cute, so picturesque."

BOYFRIEND
Holding hands and everything.

GIRLFRIEND
<3 *[Actor should say: **Less than 3**]*

BOYFRIEND
What?

GIRLFRIEND
Heart. *[Actor mimes the symbols too]*

BOYFRIEND
I get it?

GIRLFRIEND
Look at us. On a proper date.

BOYFRIEND
Yeah.

GIRLFRIEND
Almost like real life, actual Girlfriend and Boyfriend.

BOYFRIEND
Are we not actual Girlfriend and Boyfriend?

[They keep walking]

BOYFRIEND
Are we not?

GIRLFRIEND
Hm?

BOYFRIEND
Are we not?

GIRLFRIEND
Are we not what?

BOYFRIEND
Uh

GIRLFRIEND
What.

BOYFRIEND
Hi?

GIRLFRIEND
Stop.

BOYFRIEND
Okay.

GIRLFRIEND
[Gasp!]

[<u>There's a bowl of rice in the middle of the sidewalk</u>, just hanging out, on the asphalt]

BOYFRIEND
What.

GIRLFRIEND
Boyfriend.

BOYFRIEND
What.

GIRLFRIEND
Boyfriend, boyfriend, boyfriend.

BOYFRIEND
Yeah?

GIRLFRIEND
Look!

BOYFRIEND
...Uh.

GIRLFRIEND
That's a lil' bunny!

BOYFRIEND
...That's a bowl.

GIRLFRIEND
Look at this cute lil' bunny that just appeared right in front of us!

BOYFRIEND
I'm not sure what to say because that's a bowl of rice.

GIRLFRIEND
Do you think it's looking for a Mommy and Daddy?

BOYFRIEND
The bowl of rice?

GIRLFRIEND
The lil' bunny!

BOYFRIEND
It's probably looking for a group of girls

GIRLFRIEND
A group of girls? What are you saying?

BOYFRIEND
Wasn't there something at some point about bunnies, rice, and a group of girls?
There might have been a group of girls at some point.

GIRLFRIEND
There's never been a group of girls any point.

BOYFRIEND
[shrugs] Okay

GIRLFRIEND
And why are we talking fake groups of girls when this lil' bunny is real and in front of us and in obvious need of our help.

BOYFRIEND
[sigh]

GIRLFRIEND
boyfriend.

BOYFRIEND
I don't know what you want from me.

GIRLFRIEND
You want me to un-clock that bj?

BOYFRIEND
What

GIRLFRIEND
‘Cuz I’ll un-clock it

BOYFRIEND
girlfriend, no.

GIRLFRIEND
Like right now, I’ll unlock it

BOYFRIEND
girlfriend, stop,

GIRLFIREND
What time is it I don’t even know

BOYFRIEND
girlfriend, pls

GIRLFRIEND
what.
is
bj?

BOYFRIEND
Fine!
[sigh]
That’s a bunny.

GIRLFRIEND
And she’s the cutest bunny in the whole wide world!
[crouches down beside the bowl of rice]
I’d die for her.

BOYFRIEND
girlfriend, I am finding this deeply un-fun.

GIRLFRIEND
Hello lil’ bunny!
...
Hello lil’ bunny!
...
Hello lil’ bunny!
...

BOYFRIEND *[as “bunny”]*
Hi.

GIRLFRIEND
[gasp] Holy shit, did you hear that?!

BOYFRIEND
Yup.

GIRLFRIEND
The lil' bunny just said hello!

BOYFRIEND
Funny I actually thought she was saying vagina

GIRLFRIEND
That too! She's a magical.

BOYFRIEND
Well, she's not on fire so...

GIRLFRIEND
She's full of magic, I can tell

BOYFRIEND
I am looking at it and am 100% sure it's not on fire.

GIRLFRIEND *[to the bowl of rice]*
Are you a feminist, lil' bunny?
...
Are you a feminist?

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny]*
[sigh] Yes.

GIRLFRIEND
Me too, lil' bunny, I'm a feminist too!

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny"]*
Cool.

GIRLFRIEND
What are some of your feminist beliefs, lil' bunny?

BOYFRIEND
Uh. Umm.

GIRLFRIEND
It's okay, lil' bunny, don't be scared

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny"]*
Like, in the workplace?

GIRLFRIEND
Like what in the workplace?

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny"]*
Like snapping bra straps in the workplace, unless, you know, it's like an inside joke that you and the bra-wearing person have both agreed to partake in, and if at any point the bra-wearing person doesn't want to participate in the joke anymore then it's like, that's it, game over, no more bra strap snapping, no questions asked.

GIRLFRIEND
Hm. Ya, I agree. Bra snapping is annoying.
Anyway. What else lil' bunny?

BOYFRIEND
What?

GIRLFRIEND
What are some of your other feminist beliefs, lil' bunny?

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny"]*
Um. What was it...

GIRLFRIEND
Yes???

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny"]*
"Woman hold up half the sky"?

GIRLFRIEND
What?

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny"]*
Wasn't that a quote from someone somewhere at some point? "Woman hold up half the sky"?

GIRLFRIEND
That's silly, lil' bunny.
[laughs]
What?
[laughs]
I'm not interested in holding up half of anything, especially the sky.

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny"]*
Yeah, the sky sounds heavy and light at the same time.

GIRLFRIEND
Where'd you learn that quote, lil' bunny?

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny"]*
Maybe from a soup can?

GIRLFRIEND
A soup can?

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny"]*
A bunch of different soup cans in a museum?

GIRLFRIEND
Andy Warhol. Why did that name just come up from nowhere. Who is Andy Warhol?

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny"]*
I don't know? Maybe someone who invented Chicken Noodle Soup?

GIRLFRIEND
[gasp] Or maybe he invented Veggie Noodles?! With bacon and sausage?!
Bacon Sausage Veggie Noodles. Do you know what it means, lil' bunny?!

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny"]*
...I think those are just random sounds, without meaning.

GIRLFRIEND
Hmm, lil' bunny, that's what they all say but I'm not so sure. *[She gets up]*
Thank you. End of conversation.

[GIRLFRIEND starts walking off]

BOYFRIEND
Hey! Hey, where you going?!

GIRLFRIEND
I don't know! End of date. Bye!

BOYFRIEND
End of date?! What? !!

[BOYFRIEND looks at the bowl of rice.
He looks at GIRLFRIEND walking into the distance.
He looks back at the bowl of rice]

BOYFRIEND
Didn't you want to take the bunny home?
Hey!

[GIRLFRIEND is really far away now]

BOYFRIEND
[sighs]

[BOYFRIEND looks at the bowl of rice again.
Looks into the distance, looks at the bowl, looks into the distance, looks at the bowl]

BOYFRIEND
Fuck. Damn.
I'm so fucking exhausted from being so confused all the time.
I am literally confused every single second of every single day of my existence.

[He picks up the bowl of rice.]

BOYFRIEND
You look like a bowl of rice to me,
But she thinks you're a bunny.
She's also a little pissed at you right now which makes me feel worried for you.
And these real, tangible, feelings of concern wouldn't exist if I truly, 100% believed that you are an inanimate bowl of rice, and not a bunny.
Right?
So...If I tried hard enough...

[He squints, examines the bowl closely. From every angle]

BOYFRIEND
I think you could look like a bunny to me.
You might start to look like a bunny to me too.

The four MAGES walk through the desert.

MAGE7
I hope all the furniture have an earthen color

MAGE1
Like terracotta

MAGE2
Like paprika

MAGE0
Like sunbaked clay

MAGE7
And I hope the bed is connected to the wall

MAGE1
Like pushed up against it?

MAGE2
No, like the wall curves outward and becomes the bed

MAGE0
Oooh

MAGE7
Yeah, like everything is connected.

MAGE1
The wall curves outward and becomes the bed and dips down

MAGE0
And becomes the floor and then swells skyward and becomes the window

MAGE7
I heard the windows have a very pleasing square shape at the Sweet Potato Hotel

MAGE1
I heard the windows are handmade

MAGE2
Yea obviously the windows are made from fork and guess what holds forks?

MAGE0
Hands, duh.

MAGE7
Soo artisanal.

MAGE1
Does that mean the sun will shine in the shape of a rectangular prism?

MAGE2
I can't imagine that

MAGE0
That's something too beautiful to be imagined.

MAGE7
We'll have to see it to believe it.

MAGE1
What else are we looking forward to?

MAGE2
I don't know...

MAGE0
Is dreaming greedy?

MAGE7
Ooh Fuck. Off.

MAGE1
Seriously just go die pls.

MAGE2
We've been over this

MAGE0
I so SICK of going over the same shit over and over and

MAGE7
Over and over and

MAGE1
Over and over and

MAGE2
Over and over and over

MAGE0
AGAIN.

MAGE7
FUCK

MAGE1
Dreaming IS greedy

MAGE2
And shameful

MAGE0
And disgusting

MAGE7
And slutty

MAGE1
We've already established that.

MAGE7
But we've also established that we might need a little bit of dreaming

MAGE1
If we're gonna survive all this walking

MAGE2
No matter how slimy and dishonorable it makes us feel

MAGE0
And besides

MAGE7
We're not even doing the dangerous kind of dreaming

MAGE1
We're only doing the fake kind

MAGE2
The kind that stays inside your head and never leaves.

MAGE0
Okay so can we get back to it now?

MAGE7
What else are we looking forward to?

MAGE1
Uhm.

MAGE2
I don't know.

MAGE0
I’m coming up blank

MAGE7
What do you mean?

MAGE1
There has to be something

MAGE2
Maybe

MAGE0
Maybe we’ve thought of everything we’re excited about

MAGE7
That can’t be possible

MAGE1
There must be something we’ve missed

MAGE2
Like you said

MAGE0
We’ve been going over everything over and over

MAGE7
And over again. Maybe we’ve exhausted every dream?

MAGE1
But have we thought about what cheeses they might put out in the lobby at tea time?

MAGE2
Yes, we’ve thought about

MAGE0
Hard cheeses in the early afternoon and

MAGE7
Soft cheeses in the late afternoon and

MAGE1
Vice versa also, we considered that also

MAGE2
Fuck.

MAGE0
What's a medium cheese.

MAGE7
I don't know any medium cheese.

MAGE1
Think.

MAGE2
Think harder!

MAGE0
[ ]

MAGE7
[ ]

MAGE1
[ ]

MAGE2
[ ]

MAGE0
There's nothing left to dream about.

MAGE7
Maybe this a good thing.

MAGE1
How, in what world, could this be a good thing

MAGE2
I mean, it's giving me like a little bit of a constipated feeling but also

MAGE0
It also almost also feels like

MAGE7
Some sort of a feeling that feels like

MAGE1
Relief.

[The MAGES keep walking.]

The “Very Vintage Cantonese-Style” “Diner”.
HALF-CHOPSTICK, LITTLE FORK, and TOOTHPICK are deeply engaged in their little actions.
HALF-CHOPSTICK and LITTLE FORK are in a deep brainstorm.
TOOTHPICK is off to one corner.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Half-chopstick

LITTLE FORK
Little fork

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Crochet hook

LITTLE FORK
Oh, the three little prongs off a little fork

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Lollipop sticks

LITTLE FORK
After you suck off the candy part

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Um, it’s still a little stick even if the candy part is still stuck to it

LITTLE FORK
Yea, I guess, but it’s not a pure little stick, you know?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Sewing needle

LITTLE FORK
Uncurled paper clips

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Chicken wing bone.

LITTLE FORK
Chicken feet bone, the little toe bone.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
You’re copying me.

LITTLE FORK
No, I’m just riffing off you.
And also, it has personal stake for me.
I love sucking on a little chicken toe bone.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Okay, whatever. Twig.

LITTLE FORK
Mercury thermometer

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Bug leg

LITTLE FORK
Rolled tongue

HALF-CHOPSTIK
Rolled tongue?

LITTLE FORK
Rolled tongue

HALF-CHOPSTICK
I don't buy it. Show me.

LITTLE FORK
Like this, look.
[Sticks their tongue out, rolls it inward]

HALF-CHOPSTICK
[squints]
Nah. That's more like a boat.
A meat boat.

LITTLE FORK
Fine.
[Sighs]
Small animal penis-es.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
This is boring.

LITTLE FORK
Screwdriver.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Are there little sticks that are more exciting?

LITTLE FORK
Uncooked spaghetti?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Stop.

LITTLE FORK
No. Rolled tongue.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
The little sticks are a distraction!

LITTLE FORK
What do you mean. Nail clippings.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
They want us to think about little sticks so we don't have time to think about anything else.

LITTLE FORK
What could we possibly thinking about, besides little sticks?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
I don't know. That's the problem.

LITTLE FORK
What's wrong with thinking about little sticks?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Nothing, but that's the point.

LITTLE FORK
What's the point.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
I don't know.

LITTLE FORK
Okay, so can we keep going?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
No, I don't feel like it.

LITTLE FORK
But I love my little stick,

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Me too, I love my little stick too!

LITTLE FORK
My little sticks give me purpose

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Yeah me too but that's not the point!

LITTLE FORK
Okay!!! So what's the point!!?!

HALF-CHOPSTICK
I DON'T KNOW!!

LITTLE FORK
OKAY!! SO CAN WE KEEP GOING????!

HALF-CHOPSTICK
NO!

[Quiet. Little actions.]

TOOTHPICK
I hate my mom. Did I tell you guys?
The last thing she said to me before she died was that her red blood cells are super round.
Like. What?

[She pushes the toothpick a little bit higher into her eyelid]

TOOTHPICK
Y'all remember some time ago before things were same same but just a little different?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Sure.

TOOTHPICK
And right before the new kind of same-same-different really settled in,
how a BUNCH of students were like super jumpy and shit?

LITTLE FORK
mmm. Dunno if I recall.

TOOTHPICK
They! Were! So! Jumpy!
They were jumping off everything!
Jumping off buildings, jumping into oceans, splat all over the parking lots.
[Laughs]
And they were all different kinds of students too.
Computer design. Graphic design. Jocks.
Like almost every kind of student imaginable. All jumpy, jumpy.
And people in the city started calling them Grasshoppers because hearing the term "student suicide" repeated over and over and over again eventually became...tedious, I guess.
EXCEPT it's super fucked because now, whenever someone says the word Grasshopper, even if they mean the actual insect, I'll automatically think of all those naked 15-year old corpses floating in the stinky harbor in the middle of like a lot of trash.
Like, a Serious Amount of Trash.
What was I saying?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Grasshoppers.

TOOTHPICK
Oh. Right. Dead students. Anyway.
After a death, remember how the news would post a photo of the dead student's face, and for some reason, it was always be the most random photo? Like a selfie in a bathroom with smudgy makeup, or a blurry photo with some grandma at a dim sum parlor. Geez. I hated my grandma. She was such a bitch. Now she's a dead bitch. Four Eight Grandma. Did you know she would always rub her wrinkly ass hands up and down my arms in a weirdly sexual way?

LITTLE FORK
I did know that yeah.

TOOTHPICK
Shut up that's not the point. The POINT is— I never liked looking at those photos. If you stared at them for too long, you'd start to get this dreadful, lurking feeling that if the dead student was still alive, they'd tell you to "please stop studying my face, you do not have permission to come to know my face" But then again, that's not the point.
The point, or THREE points that I'm trying to make, are finally here, here they are:
A) remember all those dead students we started calling bugs? if one of those dead students
B) was a girl
C) was a girl with double lidded eyes
My stupid mom would see the circulating photo say and without fail, every single time, she'd say, "Aw, and she was so pretty too"

[She pushes the toothpick a little bit higher into her eyelid, pulling the skin so taut it's turning white]

TOOTHPICK
"Aw, and she was so pretty too"
As if it's *more* sad that she died because she was a pretty girl.
As in it would be less sad if she died and she was an ugly girl with monolids.

[She pushes the toothpick a little higher]

TOOTHPICK
Not that it wouldn't be sad,
Obviously, it would still be sad.
I'm not an idiot.
I'm not about to declare in a public space that I think an ugly girl jumping off the 15th floor isn't sad.
It's still sad, of course, I'M JUST SAYING—

[She pushes the toothpick a little higher]

TOOTHPICK
If I died, all I want is for some bitch mom out there to scrutinize a photo of me that I did not consent to share and say, "Aw, and she was a pretty girl too"

[She pushes the toothpick a little higher]

TOOTHPICK
Not that they report deaths anymore but still,
I wanna be a pretty girl, I wanna be a PRETTY GIRL,
I wanna be a PRETTY GIRL

[She pushes the toothpick a little higher]

TOOTHPCIK
Boys are allowed to have monolids.
Boys can have monolids and they're still allowed to be on movie posters.
It's not fucking FAIR—
OW

*[She jams the toothpick basically all the way up into her forehead.
The flimsy wood bends from the force, and snaps in half]*

TOOTHPICK
[gasp]
Shit!

LITTLE FORK
Dude.
[laughs]
You broke your little stick.

GIRLFRIEND and BOYFRIEND hang out in a underpass. Nighttime.
GIRLFRIEND sits on the ground, with that bowl of rice from earlier in her lap.
The wall might have a faded mosaic design featuring a green field, a blue sky and red tulips.
BOYFRIEND is sticking a stack of post-it notes up onto the wall, one by one, at an anxious pace.

GIRLFRIEND
You are covering up the pretty art.

BOYFRIEND
[stick. stick. stick]

GIRLFRIEND
I'm hungry.

BOYFRIEND
[stick, stick, stick]

[BOYFRIEND and GIRLFRIEND to look at the bowl of rice.]

GIRLFRIEND
Hm.

[They look away]

BOYFRIEND
[stick, stick. stick]

GIRLFRIEND
Why is it that every microwave has a popcorn button if every bag of microwaveable popcorn says to NEVER use the popcorn button.

BOYFRIEND
Dunno.

GIRLFRIEND
Does the popcorn button have any use at all?

BOYFRIEND
Maybe it's for microwaving lungs?

GIRLFRIEND
What?

BOYFRIEND
You know that old idiom, "Imma Ding Ur Lung?"

GIRLFRIEND
Imma Ding Ur Lung?

BOYFRIEND
I think people used to use it when they were mad at someone.

GIRLFRIEND
And they'd tell the person that they're mad at, "Imma Ding Ur Lung" ?

BOYFRIEND
Yeah. It's meant to be like hurtful. Like it was a mean thing to say.

GIRLFRIEND
How is that related to the microwave popcorn button.

BOYFRIEND
I've always linked the word Ding to microwaves because you know how microwaves go Ding Ding Ding? When they're done microwaving something, they'll go Ding Ding Ding?

GIRLFRIEND
Yeah, I'm familiar with how microwaves work

BOYFRIEND
Okay, so when I say to you "Imma Ding Ur Lung", what image does that evoke in your mind?

GIRLFRIEND
[shrug]

BOYFRIEND
For me, personally, I imagine someone extracting my lungs from inside my chest cavity and placing them onto the rotating glass dish inside a microwave and then, you know, microwaving them.

GIRLFRIEND
[sigh] Okay

BOYFRIEND
And maybe, if you wanted to be extra mean, you put their lungs in a microwave and you press the popcorn button and then POP! The lungs pop apart the way popcorn does and it's twice as cruel because not only did you microwave someone's lungs, you literally like mutilated one of their most essential organs beyond recognition.

GIRLFRIEND
[sigh] I hate this conversation.

BOYFRIEND
Never mind then.
[stick. stick stick. stick stick stick.]

[Quiet.]

GIRLFRIEND
You want bj?

BOYFRIEND
Right now?

GIRLFRIEND
[nod]

BOYFRIEND
No, I'm busy.

GIRLFRIEND
What. Seriously?

BOYFRIEND
Ya, seriously

GIRLFRIND
Wait. You're kidding. Are you kidding?

BOYFRIEND
No, I'm not kidding, I'm busy.

GIRLFRIEND
But I clocked it and everything

BOYFRIEND
You never tell me what time you clock it

GIRLFRIEND
For real you seriously don't want bj right now?

BOYFRIEND
no.

GIRLFRIEND
I'm gonna cry.

BOYFRIEND
ok.

GIRLFRIEND
Why are you so obsessed with sticking up those post-it notes

BOYFRIEND
Not sure. Feels like it's something still worth doing.
Or at least not more useless than anything else, you know?

GIRLFRIEND
Everyone else stopped doing it so long ago.

[BOYFRIEND surveys his grid of post-it notes]

BOYFRIEND
I'm trying to remember how to read it.

GIRLFRIEND
There's nothing to read. They're all blank.

BOYFRIEND
Yeah but the blankness used to mean something.
At one point, everyone knew what the blank papers meant.
And then, we just forgot.

GIRLFRIEND
Or everyone realized they were wasting time starting at blank pieces of paper and decided to move on with their lives.

BOYFRIEND
Maybe. But you know how the story goes.

GIRLFRIEND *[reciting]*
[sighs]
Before John Lennon was a wall,
John Lennon was a post-it note.

BOYFRIEND *[reciting]*
And before John Lennon was a post-it note,
John Lennon was a thought.

GIRLFRIEND *[reciting]*
But then, the thought became the note,
And the note became the wall,
And the wall became many walls.

BOYFRIEND *[reciting]*
And the walls spread,
Like fire, tumor, and dream.

GIRLFRIEND *[reciting]*
And the wall radiates,
Like magic, flower, and virus.

[pause]

GIRLFRIEND
Who told us that story?

BOYFRIEND
Someone dead.

GIRLFRIEND
Now our lil' bunny knows the story.
[to the bowl of rice]
You better remember it.

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny"]*
Okay.

[GIRLFRIEND gets up and touches the wall of blank post-it notes]

GIRLFRIEND
John Lennon, what are you, and what are you trying to tell us?

[The MAGES are still walking in the desert.
Three globular forms start to come into view on the sandy horizon]

MAGE7
Woah...

MAGE1
Up ahead

MAGE2
Are you seeing

MAGE0
What I'm seeing?

[The MAGES draw closer to the formations]

MAGE7
What...

MAGE1
In...

MAGE2
The...

MAGE0
World? ??

[The MAGES have come upon 3 OVERLORDS, lumpy alien jewel-toned autocrats.
OVERLORD-X
OVERLORD-J
OVERLORD-P]

OVERLORD-X
Congrats

OVERLORD-J
For Crash-Landing

OVERLORD-P
Onto our Planet.

MAGE7
Your planet?

MAGE1
Did we travel to a new planet?

MAGE2
I don't think we have, we've just been walking.

MAGE0
Do you mind letting us pass through?

[The MAGES attempt to continue walking.
PEW! PEW! PEW! The OVERLORDS shoot red-hot laser beams out of their eyes.
The beams hit the ground where the MAGES were just about to place their feet.]

MAGE7
[yelp!]

MAGE1
h'OH!

MAGE2
Okay!

MAGE0
Okay

[The MAGES stand still]

OVERLORD-X
Let

OVERLORD-J
Us

OVERLORD-P
Play

OVERLORD-X
A

OVERLORD-J
Gaym—

OVERLORD-P
—Muh.

MAGE7 *[whisper]*
A game?

MAGE1 *[whisper]*
Did they just say a game?

MAGE2 *[whisper]*
I don't wanna play a game

MAGE0 *[whisper]*
That doesn't sound fun

MAGE7 *[whisper]*
Aren't games supposed to be fun?

OVERLORD-X
QUIET!!!!

MAGE1
[yelp!]

MAGE2
Sure!

MAGE7
Yea!

MAGE1
We'll play a game with you.

OVERLORD-J
Nice.

OVERLORD-X
Don't worry.

OVERLORD-P
This is gonna be

OVERLORD-X
A fun

OVERLORD-J
GAYM-

OVERLORD-X
-MUH.

MAGE2
Okay!

MAGE0
We're super excited

MAGE7
To play the game

MAGE1
With you

OVERLORD-X
We are excited to play with you as

OVERLORD-J
Well.

[long-ish pause]

MAGE2
So. What are the rules?

[The OVERLORDS smile]

OVERLORD-X
This is the scenario of the game.

OVERLORD-J
Absorb it.

MAGE0
We're absorbing.

OVERLORD-P
You have crash landed onto our planet. Due to the crash, and the clumsy way with which you descended, your spacecraft has been gravely damaged.

OVERLORD-X
As you walk out from the site of the crash, you come across three benevolent Overlords who are not only generous but also, extremely powerful. We are the only beings in the known universe skilled enough to repair your damaged ship.

OVERLORD-J
With just a single zap from our eyeballs, you'll be back on your way.

MAGE7
You'll let us pass through?

OVERLORD-P
BUT HOW TO APPEASE US?!

OVERLORD-X
HOW TO IMPRESS US?

OVERLORD-J
Behold, before you

OVERLORD-P
3 Artifacts.

MAGE1
Artifacts?

MAGE2
I don't see any artifacts.

MAGE0
Are *We* the artifacts?

MAGE7
That doesn't make sense, there's four of us.

OVERLORD-X
Ooh shit.

OVERLORD-J
Did we forget the props?

[The OVERLORDS laugh]

OVERLORD-P
Fuck.

OVERLORD-X
We TOTALLY forgot the props

OVERLORD-J
Our bad.

[The OVERLORDS laugh again]

MAGE1
So...

MAGE2
We don't need to play the game?

MAGE0
Can we go?

OVERLORD-P
No

OVERLORD-X
No, you can't go.

OVERLORD-J
We're still going to play the game.

OVERLORD-P
It's a game, so just use **THE**

OVERLORD X
POWER

OVERLORD J
OF

OVERLORD X, J, P
IMAGINATION

OVERLORD-X
And visualize the Artifacts, 'kay?

OVERLORD-J
Imagine that there are three distinct Artifacts placed in front of you right now.

OVERLORD-P
The objective of the game being—

OVERLORD-X
You must determine which Artifact belongs to which Overlord.

OVERLORD-J
Or rather

OVERLORD-P
You must identify which of us is which Overlord

OVERLORD-X
In order to decipher that Overlord's unique Artifact

OVERLORD-J
Either or, or really which way.

OVERLORD-P
Making sense so far?

MAGE7
Think so?

MAGE1
We're a little confused...

OVERLORD-X
Good. That's normal.

OVERLORD-J
And intentional.

OVERLORD-P
Furthermore.

OVERLORD-X
Inside this game

OVERLORD-J
You do not speak your language

OVERLORD-P
But we speak yours just fine

MAGE2
But we speak your language

MAGE0
We're speaking it right now.

OVERLORD-X
Shut up!

OVERLORD-J
Inside this game, we understand you, but you do not understand us.

OVERLORD-P
That is the given scenario, and cannot be changed.

OVERLORD-X
Inside this game, you will be allowed to ask us three—

OVERLORD-J
And only three!

OVERLORD-P
Three yes-or-no questions in order to identify us.

OVERLORD-X
And accordingly present to us our corresponding imaginary Artifact.

OVERLORD-J
One of us will always answer truthfully

OVERLORD-P
One of us will always answer with a lie

OVERLORD-X
One of us will always answer completely randomly

OVERLORD-J
And one of us is secretly a Megalord.

MAGE7
Huh?

OVERLORD-P
And because we are kind and merciful Overlords

OVERLORD-X
To help you deduce our answers

OVERLORD-J
We will teach you the words for “Yes” and “No” in our alien language

OVERLORD-P
Sike! We’re not teaching you shit!

OVERLORD-X
The two words were secretly revealed to you some time ago.

MAGE1
What?!

MAGE2
When?!

MAGE0
Can you tell us again?

OVERLORD-J
No.

OVERLORD-P
If we just told you outright

OVERLROD-X
That would make the game too easy

OVERLORD-J
And no fun at all.

OVERLORD-P
So.

OVERLORD-X
That covers most but not all of the rules.

OVERLORD-J
So.

OVERLORD-P
Are you ready to play?

[long-ish pause]

OVERLORD-X
Are you ready to play?

MAGE7
No.
You know what?
No.
We don't wanna play.
This game doesn't sound fun.
It sounds super stupid and designed on purpose for us to fail.
And the thing is, we don't HAVE to play.
You didn't build an electric fence across this desert.
I don't, I don't see a mote full of snapping alligators, and a bridge to safety, and and you're the ones holding the lever that lowers that bridge. I don't see a bridge like that.
You know what I see? Nothing. You got nothing.
Got nothing stopping us from walking right past you, so that's what we're gonna do.
You see, we've been walking for a long long time. And then these tumors starting sprouting all over our bodies and it seems like we might be very sick and not have much time left on this planet, which by the way, has always been our planet. And all we want to do is walk to a hotel made out of sweet potato and spend a relaxing night there, and we've thought about it over and over and over again, and we're pretty sure we deserve it, so please forgive us for not having the energy to engage in your GAME OF DOOM, we need to keep walking, which BY THE WAY, literally has zero negative effect on your life so I will not ask this nicely again—
GET OUT OF OUR GODDAM WAY, COME ON GUYS, LETS GO!

[MAGE7 takes one step forward.
PEW! A laser beam bores a passage of hot air straight through MAGE7's pointy hat.
MAGE7 falls over like a tree. The burnt edges of their velvet hat look orange and crispy]

MAGE1
[exhale]

MAGE2
7

MAGE0
7

MAGE7
[ ]

MAGE1
[exhale]

MAGE2
7

MAGE0
7

MAGE7
[ ]

MAGE1
[exhale]

MAGE2
7

MAGE0
7

MAGE7
[ ]

MAGE2
7

MAGE0
7?

MAGE7
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]

MAGE2
7
7
7

MAGE0
7
7
7

MAGE1
Stop. He’s gone.

MAGE7
[ ]
[ ]
[ ]

[It’s like a wire in a circuit got snipped.]

OVERLORD-P
Are you ready to play?

The Diner. *HALF-CHOPSTICK and LITTLE FORK are, ever still, engrossed in their little action. BOYFRIEND sits with his chin resting on a table, looking pretty defeated, staring at the bowl of rice/bunny.*

BOYFRIEND
I feel like I have a million mosquito bites on my brain and I can't scratch them.

LITTLE FORK
You say that a lot and I would appreciate it if you said it less.

BOYFRIEND *[To HALF-CHOPSTICK]*
Hey.
Hey.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
I'm kinda busy.

BOYFRIEND *[To HALF-CHOPSTICK]*
Can I get a standard vintage Ben2 sampler.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Seriously?

BOYFRIEND
I could really use a pick-me up.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Can't it wait?

BOYFRIEND
Pls.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
I'm busy.

BOYFRIEND
With what?!

HALF-CHOPSTICK
I'm writing songs.

BOYFRIEND
In that wok?!

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Yes!!!

BOYFRIEND
[sighs]

HALF-CHOPSTICK *[to LITTLE FORK]*
Hey, can you get this kid a Ben2 Sampler.

LITTLE FORK *[to HALF-CHOPSTICK]*
Uh, can't you see. *[Holds up a sweet potato].* I'm a little busy.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Fine. I'm going to lose my train of thought but fine. I'll go get it.

LITTLE FORK
That train was going straight to hell anyways.

BOYFRIEND
Why do all trains lead to hell.

LITTLE FORK
They do, kiddo, they always have.

[HALF-CHOPSTICK gets up from their post at the wok and bends down to reach under a counter. It's laborious and hard to watch.]

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Here you go. One standard vintage Ben2 sampler. On the house.
Hope the nostalgic images make you feel better, little dude.

[The Standard Vintage Ben2 Sampler is a plastic tray filled with printed images of nostalgic, Cantonese diner comfort foods. It does not contain any actual food. The Ben2 Sampler is the only thing served at this diner.]

BOYFRIEND *[Manifesting into the Ben2 sampler]*
It is 3 pm. It is a picturesque afterschool afternoon.
I am a school child.
I had a wonderful day at school.
I learned math.
I played with friends on blue rubber mulch.
I rearranged blocks and bounced several balls.
I am now walking home afterschool.
It might be raining but the rain is light
and made of water.
I'm allowed to use an umbrella.
I am walking by a little Cantonese diner.
Hmm. Should I grab a little afterschool snack?
What little afterschool snack should I get?
Egg tart? Very nostalgic.
Crispy bun with condensed milk? Very nostalgic.
A bowl of macaroni and ham soup? Very nostalgic.
Red bean ice drink? Very nostalgic.
Pork chop baked rice? Daddy's favorite.
Very nostalgic.
Curry fish balls?
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.

[HALF-CHOPSTICK and LITTLE FORK watch BOYFRIEND]

LITTLE FORK
Look at him. Geez. I mean, you have to admit.
It's kinda pathetic to look at.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Look at us though. We're the same.

LITTLE FORK
How.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
You're "making" a "hotel"

LITTLE FORK
And you're "writing" a "song"

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Mm. See. Hotel. Song. Ben2. We're all the same.

LITTLE FORK
Whatever.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
You know. I've always wondered.
Are there two Bens?
And if so, where is the other Ben, and is he also a lunch tray?

LITTLE FORK
Ben2...
Ben-Too...
Ben-To...

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Or,
Is Ben2 the second version of Ben.
And if so, why was the first Ben replaced?

LITTLE FORK
Ben-To...
Ben-Toe...

[LITTLE FORK laughs]

LITTLE FORK
It's all just sounds.
Stop worrying so much.
In the end, it's all just sounds.

BOYFRIEND *[low whispers]*
Very nostalgic.
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.
Daddy's favorite.
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.
Very nostalgic.
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.
Daddy's favorite.
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.
Very nostalgic.
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.
Daddy's favorite.
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.
Very nostalgic.
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.
Daddy's favorite.
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.
Very nostalgic.
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.
Daddy's favorite.
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.
Very nostalgic.
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.
Daddy's favorite.
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.
Very nostalgic too.
Very nostalgic.
Daddy's favorite.

The MAGES are running for their lives. MAGE1 is carrying the little corpse of MAGE 7 on their back. They are running away from a wall of flames

MAGE1
Keep running

MAGE2
We used magic, that's SO ILLEGAL

MAGE0
We set them on fire, we—

MAGE7 *[MAGE7's lines are no longer read aloud, maybe they're projected or something?]*
[Killed them]

MAGE1
Don't say it

MAGE2
Just keep running

MAGE0
Don't look back

MAGE7
[Look back]

[The MAGES look back. The wall of fire is gaining on them]

MAGE1
OH SHIT

MAGE2
Run

MAGE0
My feet hurt.

MAGE7
[Murderers]

MAGE1
Are we sure they're dead.

MAGE2
Who, the overlords?

MAGE0
Yeah, I'm pretty sure we—

MAGE7
[Killed them]

MAGE1
We stood there until they died.

MAGE2
No we stood there until we realized the fire wouldn't stop spreading.

MAGE0
I can't hear them screaming anymore and they were very loud and good at screaming

MAGE7
[Criminals]

MAGE1
Nononono we're not criminals.

MAGE2
We were acting in self-defense, really truly self-defense

MAGE0
They killed, they killed—

MAGE7
[7]

MAGE1
Let's not think about that

MAGE2
Keep running

MAGE0
Don't think about anything besides running.

MAGE7
[Criminals don't deserve rooms at the Sweet Potato Hotel]

MAGE1
SHUT UP

MAGE2
A distraction.

MAGE0
We need to distract ourselves from what's happening maybe with math or something??

MAGE7
[The sand is turning to glass]

MAGE1
Oh my god why is the fire still spreading

MAGE2
I don't get it at all!! We are not that powerful!!!

MAGE0
How on earth did we manage to seemingly set—

MAGE7
[The whole world on fire]

MAGE1
The whole world on fire.

MAGE2
The fire came from us, why can't we control it.

MAGE0
The fire came from us, why is it trying to kill us.

MAGE7
[Tumors are cells that do not die when they should]

MAGE1
Stop. We need a distraction.

MAGE2
Something comforting.

MAGE0
Something that we've thought of over and over before, where the conclusion is always the same.

MAGE7
[Should we die when we should]

MAGE1
Or should we shamelessly keep going.

MAGE2
How can we be sure there will be room for us?

MAGE0
Let's start from the top.

[As their feet start to cook, the MAGES continue to run]

Meanwhile. In a Squat Toilet Stall at the back of the Diner.

GIRLFRIEND
Hey Long-Face.

TOOTHPICK
Don't call me that. My face is very round.

GIRLFRIEND
It's a saying. I'm saying I think you look sad.

TOOTHPICK
Is the saying saying that or are you saying that.

GIRLFRIEND.
Hm. I'm using the saying to say that I think you look sad. So both? I guess?

TOOTHPICK
Okay. Both. Got it. Message ding ding ding received.

GIRLFRIEND
Are you saying you'd have rather me just say it directly than going at it in a roundabout way by using a saying?

TOOTHPICK
No. I'm saying that I'd rather you not comment on what I look like at all.

GIRLFRIEND
Wow. That's.
Pretty direct of you.

TOOTHPICK.
Sorry. *[Sigh]*
I'm not really in the mood for girl talk right now. *[Sigh]*

GIRLFRIEND
Why not? You're always in the mood for girl talk.

TOOTHPICK
I broke my little stick. See?

[TOOTHPICK holds out each half of the broken toothpick in her left and right hands. Looking a bit like a Jesus showing off the burr holes in the center of his palms.]

GIRLFRIEND
I see that. I'm sorry. You kind of look like God right now though with your hands out like that.

TOOTHPICK
I don't wanna be God, I wanna be Mulan!

GIRLFRIEND
Isn't Mulan kind of God at this point.

TOOTHPICK
No. She's just a small town girl with a heart of gold and incredible high kicks.

GIRLFRIEND
Really?

TOOTHPICK
Well. In the last movie she was actually a water bender.
And the one before that, she was a cop that was also really good at barbeque.

GIRLFRIEND
Oh I remember that one.
Didn't she kill Katniss Everdeen, Harry Potter, and Jean Valjean all at the same time with a pair of long tongs or something?

TOOTHPICK
Yeah. And she used their corpses as kindling to make the most delicious pork belly ever. That sear was legendary.

GIRLFRIEND
Geez. I have trouble keeping up with all the different Mulan's these days.
Used to be easier when I was a kid and Mulan was just the cartoon in government PSA's talking about high-speed rails and why we're all going to jail.

TOOTHPICK
[Sigh]. I'd love to be in a PSA.

GIRLFRIEND
I know. I'm really sorry about your little stick.

TOOTHPICK
The Government gave me one week to get double-eyelids.
And this little stick was my only chance.
And it was the chance of a lifetime.
My callback is tomorrow. Look at me.
I bet you can't even register the sadness in my eyes because they're so small.
But the sadness is there. I promise you. It's storming. I fucking blew it.

GIRLFRIEND
Hm.

TOOTHPICK
I bet Mulan never broke her little stick.

GIRLFRIEND
I bet Mulan has broken some sticks. Made some mistakes.

TOOTHPICK
No. She was perfect in every way. That's the whole point.

GIRLFRIEND
Are you sure you're not in the mood for girl talk?

TOOTHPICK
I mean. I'm pretty sure.

GIRLFRIEND
Even if I show you my little stick?

TOOTHPICK
Your little stick?! I didn't know you had a little stick. I mean.
Besides your BF's little stick penis.

[TOOTHPICK and GIRLFRIEND dissolve into girlish giggles]

TOOTHPICK
Okay. Fine. I guess can do some girl talk.

GIRLFRIEND
Look at this.

[GIRLFRIEND pulls out a tiny, clear container that is rectangular in shape as well as a small, plastic tweezer-like contraption.]

GIRLFRIEND
These are my treasures.

TOOTHPICK *[captivated]*
...What is it?

GIRLFRIEND
This. This, my friend, is a Double-Eyelid Kit.

TOOTHPICK
A.
A Double-Eyelid Kit?

GIRLFRIEND
You can use it to give yourself double-eyelids—

TOOTHPICK
What.

GIRLFRIEND
Instantly

TOOTHPICK
You're. You're fucking with me.

GIRLFRIEND
I'm not!

TOOTHPICK
You're fucking with me and that's not nice.

GIRLFRIEND
I promise. I'm not fucking with you. I'll teach you how to use it right now.

TOOTHPICK
What.

GIRLFRIEND
For your callback tomorrow! You wanna?

TOOTHPICK
Yea. Yes. I wanna.

[TOOTHPICK snatches the tiny tweezer and shoves it up her eyelid.
The familiar feeling of pain provides her with an unfathomable sense of relief]

TOOTHPICK
Oh okay okay okay I get it.
The tweezer provides 2 points of contact instead of 1.
Better lift. Genius.

GIRLFRIEND
No, that's not it.

[GIRLFRIEND opens the container,
and pulls out several small plastic sheets lined with thin, white stripes]

TOOTHPICK
What are those?

GIRLFRIEND
Little stickers—

TOOTHPICK
Little stickers?!

GIRLFRIEND
Stick plus E and R.

TOOTHPICK *[in awe]*
Somehow it always goes back to the little sticks.

GIRLFRIEND
These stickers when applied correctly to the hood of the eye, will create a double-lidded effect that can withstand blinking, sweat, and a small amount of tears. One set of stickers, when probably placed, should last about 12 hours.

TOOTHPICK
Woah.

GIRLFRIEND
Want me to show you?

TOOTHPICK
Yes pls.

GIRLFRIEND
Okay. Just a fair warning tho. It kinda hurts to put them on.

TOOTHPICK
If it didn't hurt, I wouldn't believe in it.

GIRLFRIEND *[as she demonstrates]*
First, you have to remove the outer white opaque layer in order to access the strip of clear tape underneath. Using the tweezer, you want to catch each end of the strip of tape. This step is super fiddly so you'll wanna be careful with your movements here, and try to snatch the tape on either your first and second go, or else the tape might start losing its stickiness. Light touch. There.

TOOTHPICK
Nice

GIRLFRIEND
I got it.

> *[GIRLFRIEND lifts up the tweezer now suspending a piece transparent tape. Everything about this process is so delicate. The tape has the glint of an insect wing. The two girls look like scientists on the verge of a great discovery]*

GIRLFRIEND *[continuing the demonstration]*
Now. Don't fidget. I'm just going to push up the skin of your eyelid with my fingers a little bit, and then insert the tape by pushing the tweezer up under the skin, creating the fold. Once you feel like you're happy with where you have the tape, you'll need to remove the tweezer without dislodging the tape. That's the painful part. I've found it helpful to use the surface of the eyeball, that small flat area right before the ball recedes into the skull, as an opposing force. Push down on the eyeball. Don't worry if you start to see stars.

TOOTHPICK *[seeing stars]*
I'm not worrying.

GIRLFRIEND
Next, I'm going to slide out the tweezer by pulling out the two tips in opposite directions. Try not to flinch or pull back if it feels like the tweezer is cutting into your skin, because in a way, that wouldn't be the worst thing in the world for our purposes. You ready?

TOOTHPICK
Do it.

GIRLFRIEND
3
2
1

[GIRLFRIEND extracts the tweezer from TOOTHPICK's eyelid.]

TOOTHPICK
[blink]
Did it work?
[blink blink]
Did it work?!?!

GIRLFRIEND
It's working!! Yay! Pretty! I'm so happy!
Now no matter how much you blink, the skin isn't going to unfold for 12 hours, at least.

TOOTHPICK
Oh. Oh my God. Wow.
Ow.

GIRLFRIEND
Right?

TOOTHPICK
Oiiii. OW.

GIRLFRIEND
It hurts like hell right?

TOOTHPICK
I need to. I need to look in the mirror. No. Wait. I'll. I'll look later. When I've done the other eye.

GIRLFRIEND
Okay! Up to you.

TOOTHPICK
Wow. Thanks. Thank you. Really.

GIRLFRIEND
I mean. You're welcome, of course. I gotta warn you tho. If you use the the tape too much, your skin might get super itchy. But you can't ever rub your eye while using the tape, because that will make the tape eject itself. There's nothing more embarrassing than a random piece a tape poking out of your eyelid without you realizing. And you'll have to carry the anxiety of that possibility happening at any point throughout the day. Also, doesn't it feel like a rabies-afflicted earthworm is trying to drill its entire body into the tear duct of your eye right now?

TOOTHPICK
Yeah, absolutely, it feels exactly like that.

GIRLFRIEND
Yeah, that feeling doesn't go away.
And at the end the day, probably during a moment of loneliness, you're going have to remove the tapes from your eyes. The tapes are going to yank and pull at your skin, and your eyelids are going to start to loosen in a way that feels irreversible. You'll play and rub the greasy strip of tape between your fingers and you're going to have to reckon with...
Something.
I don't know what it is.
But something. You're going to have to reckon with something.

TOOTHPICK
Sure. Ok.

GIRLFRIEND.
Cool beans. Let me know when you run out of the little stickers.
I think I still have some laying around somewhere.

[GIRLFRIEND gets up to leave]

TOOTHPICK
Hey. Why are you giving this to me. Don't you want to keep it for yourself?

GIRLFRIEND
Honestly. I don't know. I used to tape my eyes everyday but lately I'm just. Hm.
I'm just tired, I guess.

TOOTHPICK
Bullshit.

GIRLFRIEND
Okay yea but sometime ago, I had a cyst growing between my boobs.
It was becoming really large and inflamed and I thought it might have been a tumor because there's no way of knowing these days.

TOOTHPICK
Dead doctors.

GIRLFRIEND
Yeah. It's a bummer sometimes.
So boyfriend and I were trying to see if we could pop it.
Because you know, you can't pop tumors.
So we're squeezing and squeezing and it hurts like hell, and we're about to give up and then—
POP!
The cyst pops and starts squirting liquid.
White-greenish tofu liquid with a Very Sour Smell.
The more we squeezed it, the more liquid it squirted.
It seemed like the squirting would never end.
So we're laughing and squeezing and squirting and laughing and squeezing until, until well—

Some of the tofu liquid
Entered his mouth
He then
Proceeded to vomit
But not on
Me
Which I
Appreciated.

TOOTHPICK
Huh.

GIRLFRIEND
It's a combination of that memory and the tiredness, I guess.
That made me lose my motivation to tape my eyes.

TOOTHPICK
Okay. I don't really get it but okay. Thanks again.

GIRLFRIEND
You're welcome.

[GIRLFRIEND gets up to leave, for real this time]

GIRLFRIEND
Good girl talk.

TOOTHPICK
I agree. Pretty good girl talk.

GIRLFRIEND
Good luck with your callback tomorrow.
I hope you do really, really well.

TOOTHPICK
I'll try my best. I'll going bring honor back to this shitty little diner.

GIRLFRIEND
That'd be great.

TOOTHPICK
Thank you. For the first time in my stupid life, I feel like half of a whole person.

The wall of fire rages closer and closer as the MAGES' heels continuously pound into the ground. The desert has now burned itself into a boundless field of reflective glass.

MAGE2
FASTER!

MAGE0
COME ON! FASTER!

[MAGE1, still carrying the corpse of MAGE7 on their back, is falling behind]

MAGE7
[Hey, guys?]

MAGE1 *[v. out of breath]*
GUYS. I'm getting really REALLY TIRED.

MAGE2
So?!

MAGE0
We're ALL TIRED.

MAGE7
[You're not special for feeling tired]

MAGE1
Can't someone else carry 7 for a bit?

MAGE2
Nono we can't

MAGE0
There's no time to switch, just keep running.

MAGE7
[Drop 7]

MAGE1
Drop 7? Drop 7?!!? Did one of you just suggest we drop 7?!!!?!?!?

MAGE2
Drop 7! Do it! Do it now!

MAGE0
Do you really want us to get fucking burned alive all for a motherfucking corpse NO THANK YOU

MAGE7
[I am more than a corpse]

MAGE1
GUYS! STOP! Wait up PLS I am begging I am begging both of you with my whole heart PLEASE!

[MAGE2 and MAGE0 stop running for a moment, allowing for MAGE1 to catch up. The flames grow taller by the second]

MAGE2
Okay 1, the way we see it is either you drop 7 and come with us or

MAGE0
We're gonna leave you behind, we'll do it, we've been gearing up to do it anyway

MAGE7
[Ooo they finally said it]

MAGE1
Come on guys don't do this, we have to stick together.

MAGE2
No we don't, actually. And to be honest it is more likely that the hotel clerk will make room for us

MAGE0
If there is less of us so...

MAGE2
Bye, we guess??

MAGE0
Buh-bye.

[MAGE2 and MAGE0 start run off. MAGE1 grabs them by their tiny robes.]

MAGE2
AHK! Let go!

MAGE0
Let GO you never-gonna-see-a-hotel-room-in-your-whole-life-low-life-fuck!

MAGE7
[Tell them I am a month of the year]

MAGE1
Listen, listen to me, don't you remember? Us 4 together? We make up a code!

MAGE2
A code?

MAGE0
I don't remember anything about a code. Hm. Maybe a little?

MAGE 7
[We stand for a recurrent summer day]

MAGE1
7 stands for JULY. 1 stands for FIRST. And you two, 2 and 0, stand for TWENTY.

MAGE2
20?

MAGE0
What does 20 stand for?

MAGE 7
[2020]

MAGE1
I don't, I don't remember completely but I think it stands for some kind of year!?

MAGE2
20?

MAGE0
The Year 20?

[MAGE2 and MAGE0 bust out laughing. Manic laughter]

MAGE2
So even if you're right, than whatever date we stand for must be from a billion billion

MAGE 0
Billion billion billion billion

MAGE2
BILLION BILLION YEARS AGO.

MAGE0
Who's gives a flying shit about some multi-billion-year-old-has-been-code?!

[MAGE2 and MAGE0 go HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA]

MAGE 7
[July 1st, 2020]

MAGE1
Us 4, together, stand for a day in the year that was repeatedly marked as important!

MAGE 7
[Repeatedly marked by a large group of people as important]

MAGE1
Until somehow it wasn't important anymore...

MAGE 7
[That large group of people lived in a city called Hong Kong]

MAGE1
But someone out there must think this date is still important and that is must be why we still exist!

MAGE2
Someone who.

MAGE0
Someone WHO WHAT WHERE and WHY aren't they protecting us.

MAGE7
[Hong Kong no longer exists. For security reasons, maybe Hong Kong never existed.]

MAGE1
We have to stick together, we have to get to the Sweet Potato Hotel together, that's all I know.

[The flames roar and rage]

MAGE2
Hm...no.

MAGE0
No, thank you.

[MAGE2 and MAGE0 resume running. They disappear into the distance]

MAGE7
[7, 1, 2, 0]

MAGE1 *[calling to MAGE2 and MAGE0 disappearing into the distance]*
2 and 0 mean nothing without 7 and 1! You hear me?! You MEAN NOTHING.

MAGE7
[No Meaning]

[Completely trapped by a tornado of fire,
MAGE1 holds onto MAGE7's body tightly as their little robes catch on fire]

The GOVERNMENT and their newest star are doing a press circuit to celebrate the latest live-action Mulan installment. The interview room is weirdly dinky, and the walls are covered in black, velvet curtains that look like they were fished out of the basement of an old supermarket. TOOTHPICK looks very smart in a crisp blue suit, silky hair and pretty eyes.
GOVERNMENT interviews GOVERNMENT.
A real-life transcript.

GOVERNMENT-INTERVIEWER
You beat out thousands of women for this role. I mean have you grasped how much responsibility is on your shoulders and like is it—
Do you wake up and you're like oh my gosh pinch me is this real life?
I am Mulan.

TOOTHPICK
I think it's just proud to be—
Uhm—
One of everybody.
Because as I said.
The spirit is always there. You know?
To show it on big screen.
It's our honor.

GOVERNMENT-INTERVIEWER
Yeeeah **:)**
And Government-Director, I mean.

GOVERNEMNT-DIRECTOR
Mhm.

GOVERNMENT-INTERVIEWER
You have been the first female to direct the highest live-action budget—

GOVERNMENT-DIRECTOR
Mmm :)

GOVERNMENT-INTERVIEWER
Ever!

GOVERNMENT-INTERVIEWER
What does that mean to you?

GOVERNMENT-DIRECTOR
Uhm. Well. It means. It means a lot.
And particularly today.
Today is International's Women's day.
And today I get to acknowledge to myself,
And you,
And and all your uhm viewers
That this is what it looks like when women

GOVERNMENT-DIRECTOR
Mm-Hmm :)

GOVERNMENT-INTERVIEWER
Mm mmmmmm :)

Makes movies
Of this scale.
Like. I I I
I led this army, yes, but I had many many generals all of whom were
Females **:)**
So it was very female-led filmmaking
And I hope that that this movie encourages other studios to give other women uhm
The opportunity to work at this level.

GOVERNMENT-INTERVIEWER
Yeeeah **:)**
That's awesome **:)**

GOVERNMENT-DIRECTOR
Yeeeeah :)

GOVERNMENT-INTERVIEWER
What was the most challenging part of this whole journey for each of you?

[GOVERNMENT-DIRECTOR reaches over to touch TOOTHPICK tenderly on the forearm]

GOVERNMENT-DIRECTOR
It was really finding Mulan.
We searched for a year.
Around the world.
And And Very Deeply in China.
And we couldn't find her.
So we started again **:)**
And we went back to China and that's where I became aware of Toothpick.
Put her through the most punishing audition of all time
And she was astonishing
And a great gift for this movie **:)**

GOVERNMENT-INTERVIEWER
So I'm actually taking martial arts uuuhh lessons right now and I was wondering if you have any tips for a young female who is trying to be a badass like you? **:)**

TOOTHPICK
Uhm. You mean right now?
I did I did take uhm three months of physical training
And uh
uhm
how do you say fighting choreography training
And horse riding.
But uhm
I also did some free-style on set :)

GOVERNMENT INTERVIEWER
Woooow **:)**

TOOTHPICK
Which is...
You know I'm not that confident as a martial artist because I am not like...
Professional...
But when I...just forget everything...
And just focus...
Be in the moment...
I could really surprise myself with some moves that I don't even know.
That's weird.
Hehe.
:)

GOVERNMENT-INTERVIEWER
:)

GOVERNMENT-DIRECTOR
:)

As MAGE1 is being burned alive, here are some answers...

MAGE1
July.

MAGE7
[Cantonese is supple. A playful language. Full of puns and word play.]

MAGE1
July is hot where we come from.

MAGE7
[For example, the Cantonese phrase "Fuck Your Mom"]

MAGE1
And humid too.

MAGE7
[Sounds very similar to the English phrase "Delay No More"]

MAGE1
Did you know I'm not from here?

MAGE7
[Sometimes, this makes it hard to determine if someone is telling you to hurry up]

MAGE1
That we are not from here?

MAGE7
[Or if they are so angry with you, they must fuck your mom in the hi]

MAGE1
I am glad I finally remembered July.

MAGE7
[I suggest using context clues]

MAGE1
July is hot and humid where we come from.

MAGE7
[By the way, in case you haven't figured it out , "hi" is Cantonese slang for the word "cunt"]

MAGE1
What else can I remember?

MAGE7
[In similar vein, in similar spirit, Cantonese speakers were playful, supple protestors]

MAGE1
Think.

MAGE7
[They concocted euphemisms to skirt censorship. Like a river, they spoke in the language of water]

MAGE1
Think think think.

MAGE7
["It's raining" signified the deployment of tear gas.]

MAGE1
"If we burn..."

MAGE7
["Use magic" meant to set something on fire]

MAGE1
"You burn with us."

MAGE7
["To renovate" is to vandalize a street or a storefront]

MAGE1
Jennifer Lawrence...

MAGE7
["05 432 680" tonally sounds similar to the lyrics of a national anthem that is no longer sung]

MAGE1
Please save Hong Kong.

MAGE7
["Dreaming" was a code word for the act of protest itself]

[MAGE1 joins MAGE7]

MAGE1
[You don't need to know this, but in Cantonese—]

MAGE7
[The verb used for the act of dreaming is the same verb used to describe—]

MAGE1
[The action of whipping an egg white into its highest peaks.]

MAGE1
[Faaht Dream]

MAGE7
[To spread]

MAGE1
[Faaht Dream]

MAGE7
[To proliferate Dream]

MAGE1
[Faaht Dream]

MAGE7
[To radiate Dream]

MAGE1
[Faaht Moong, 發夢]

MAGE7
[Last night, we gathered at the meeting point to dream]

MAGE1
[As we dreamt, magic lit up the streets and skies until it started to rain]

MAGE7
[Do you understand what we are saying?]

MAGE1
[Bacon Sausage Veggie Noodles]

MAGE7
[That used to be the most important code]

MAGE1
[The code at the center of every other code]

MAGE7
[No one remembers anymore what idea the code was trying to protect]

MAGE1
[We say Bacon Sausage Veggie Noodles]

MAGE7
[Because everything else worth saying has already been lost]

MAGE1
[Bacon Sausage Veggie Noodles]

MAGE7
[Will you dream with us for one moment]

MAGE1
[What that might have once meant?]

The Diner.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
So, in my head, most of the John Lennon documentary takes place in the countryside.
The opening shot. It's July.
Close up shot on a young bald child cooking fried rice on the hot asphalt for his little brother, using nothing but the heat of the sun.
No one comments on the quaintness of the village they live in or anything. Absolutely nothing is commented on. It's just a single, unmoving frame on these two kids eating fried rice off the concrete. Like little animals. And then, smash cut, a brick wall covered top to bottom in blank post-it notes. A strong gust of wind. The little papers are blown off, and become migratory birds.
The empty brick wall starts to soften into skin.
A nose. Lips. Two eyes.
John Lennon.
John Lennon's face emerges like mud from the wall. It's wet. And muddy.
John Lennon The Wall is recreating John Lennon The Man.
The wall breast feeds the man. And this is happening everywhere, alright?
These walls are blooming all over, in random places, everywhere.
Like broken mirrors. Spreading.
It's a global, reflective perspective.
And then the two little boys start singing a song with ringing voices.

GIRLFRIEND
That sounds awesome.

BOYFRIEND
Yeah, it really does.

GIRLFRIEND
Can our little bunny daughter be part of the documentary?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Sure! The more the merrier!

BOYFRIEND
She still has a lot of learning to do but she's going to be a global leader one day.

GIRLFRIEND
This lil' bunny is going to discover what feminism really is.

BOYFRIEND
Yeah.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Maybe feminism is fried rice eaten with your fingers.

GIRLFRIEND
[shrugs] Your guess is as good as mine.

[TOOTHPICK bursts into the diner wearing a giant gold dress.
The dress is spectacular. The size of a planet]

BOYFRIEND
Woah.

TOOTHPICK *[In a bit of a daze]*
Last night, I was at the Hollywood premiere of the newest live-action Mulan movie. You guys weren't there. There was no one in attendance besides the people that made the movie. And at the end of the screening, the producers and the writers and the directors and the rest of the cast and crew all stood up and clapped for the movie and we all congratulated ourselves on doing such a good job on the movie and creating such a wonderful movie that will provide such unity and inspiration to people all over the world, and I was feeling very good about myself until I noticed again that not a single person that wasn't involved in the movie was there to watch it. Not one audience member. And no one complimented me on my giant gold dress.
I worried so much that wearing a dress this Giant and this Gold would be too garish but it wasn't at all. Everyone at the premiere was dressed in equal measures of spectacular so I don't think that my giant gold dress actually stood out much at all. I kept hoping I'd spot someone wearing a hoodie, maybe a fan or even someone just walking by, someone in an everyday hoodie who would be shocked and therefore blessed to see a dress as giant and golden as mine.
But no one like that was there at all.

[TOOTHPICK sits down at the table, looking super lost. After a little while, HALF-CHOPSTICK spoons some food from their wok and hands TOOTHPICK a bowl of noodles]

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Here. Eat this.

TOOTHPICK *[shocked]*
You serve food here now? Is that even allowed?

HALF-CHOPSTICK
Nope. It's super illegal. But you look hungry and this is a bowl of Bacon Sausage Veggie Noodles.

TOOTHPICK
Bacon Sausage Veggie Noodles?

GIRLFRIEND
Try some.

BOYFRIEND
It's really good.

[TOOTHPICK takes a slurp]

TOOTHPICK
Holy shit. This is freaking amazing.
[Big slurp]
You'd think having two meat products would be redundant but

[Big slurp]
The bacon and the sausage each bring something totally unique to the dish!

GIRLFRIEND
Right?!

[TOOTHPICK takes another slurp of noodles. And then another.
She eats rapturously. Bits of veggie and meat spill onto her giant gold dress]

GIRLFRIEND
At first, it was just a bunch of random sounds.

BOYFRIEND
And now it's a food.

HALF CHOPSTICK
It's random sounds and a dish. It's both!

GIRLFRIEND
Wow. That's progress right there. Right in front of us. That's nutso.
[To the bowl of rice]
That's nutso, lil' bunny!

BOYFRIEND *[as "bunny"]*
Nutso!

LITTLE FORK
Ooo hot hot hot!

[LITTLE FORK dumps an armful of sweet potatoes onto the table]

LITTLE FORK *[v. proud]*
Freshly roasted sweet potatoes! I've been working hard on these.
Dig in, everyone, dig in! Time to eat rice!

BOYFRIEND *[going in for a sweet potato]*
Don't mind if I do.

[Everyone grabs a sweet potato]

HALF-CHOPSTICK
You know. They do look like little hotels. From a very different world.
If I were tiny, like itty-bitty sized, I'd love to book a room and just stay there forever.

GIRLFRIEND *[pointing to a spot on her sweet potato]*
This is where'd I nap all day.

BOYFRIEND *[pointing at another spot]*
This is where I'd go for a swim.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
This is where I'd write songs in my own mosquito language.

LITTLE FORK
Do you know what's been bothering me?

HALF CHOPSTICK
Stop being bothered and just eat.

LITTLE FORK
The Single Most Unbelievable Thing about the Infinite Sweet Potato Hotel paradox?
It's not the fact that the paradox requires a finite structure contain to an infinite number rooms.
And it's not the fact that there's a magical hotel clerk that's able to work tirelessly 24/7.
It's the fact that the paradox relies on the fact that every time someone new shows up to the hotel,
Every single guest would be willing to switch rooms to make room for this stranger.
Can you even fathom? I mean. It's completely delusional.
In order for the paradox to work, 100% of the infinite number of guests would have to be infinitely willing to switch rooms an infinite number of times in order to make room for an infinite number of random randos they have never even met? Impossible.
At least one of them would always be too busy napping.
Or swimming.
Or writing songs.
The paradox is dead on arrival.

GIRLFRIEND
Hm...I'd switch rooms to make room for someone.
Especially if it seems like they could really use it.

LITTLE FORK
That's easy for you to say when you're so large you can hold an entire hotel in your palm.

GIRLFRIEND
Maybe.
[Takes a bite of sweet potato]
I think just ate some of your hotel guests.

LITTLE FORK
[Sigh]
That's probably for the best.

[Quiet. A meal is happening. A meal is finally happening]

TOOTHPICK
[looks around]
Hey look. It's raining.

[Puffs of thick white smoke spreads through the diner.
From the outside. From the gangrene streets.
There's so much smoke. It consumes every bit of empty space.

How long has this been happening
Has this been happening the whole time?]

LITTLE FORK
[looks around]
Oh.

GIRLFRIEND
[looks around]
Oh.

BOYFRIEND
[looks around]
Oh.

HALF-CHOPSTICK
[Looks around]

Oh yeah.

[Cough.
Coughcough]

That's rain.
That's okay.

GIRLFRIEND *[holding out her hand]*
come on boyfriend. it's time for bj now.

BOYFRIEND *[nodding and taking her hand]*
bj for the end of the world.

[GIRLFRIEND and BOYFRIEND put down their food and disappear into back of the diner.
The smoke rises and rises and rises.
HALF-CHOPSTICK, LITTLE FORK, and TOOTHPICK ignore the smoke.
They look back down and attempt to continue their meal.]

HALF-CHOPSTICK
[Cough.]
Glorious Bacon. Noodles of Our Time.

[Cough. coughcoughcough. COUGH COUGH COUGH COUGH COUGH]

[END OF PLAY]