

ROMEO
BECOMES
a
śadhū

A play written in honor of Amma, the 'Hugging Saint.'

Performed in California and Rhode Island during Amma's 1994 U.S. Tour

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Rising in Love:

My Wild and Crazy Ride to Here and Now,

with Amma, the Hugging Saint

Cast of Characters

(in order of appearance)

- Shiva:** One of the Gods in the Hindu Trinity, Lord Shiva is said to abide on Mt. Kailash, in perpetual meditation. He wears a deer-skin around His waist, His skin is blue; and in the matted locks of His hair the crescent moon is visible.
- Narada:** The great ‘prankster Sage’ of Hinduism, anywhere from 40 to 80 years old.
- Rama:** One of the great Indian Incarnations of God; here 14 years old. His skin is a light blue, and he carries a bow and quiver full of arrows.
- Krishna:** Another of the Indian incarnations of God; here in late teens or early 20s. Exquisitely handsome, His skin is blue, He carries a flute, and has a peacock feather in his crown.
- Radha:** Krishna’s beautiful young consort and foremost devotee. Radha is considered to be an Incarnation of the Divine Mother.
- The Gopis:** Krishna’s milkmaid devotees.
- Myrna:** A woman from Long Island, New York, mid-40’s.
- Durga Prem:** A devotee of Amma, and follower of the path of devotion, mid 30’s
- Rameshio:** An arrogant and immature follower of the path of wisdom, mid-40s.
- Romeo:** A prize-fighter from Sicily, mid-20’s.
- Chandio:** Romeo’s enemy, demonic cousin of Romeo’s ex-girlfriend, Julia.
- Mundio:** Chandio’s demonic brother.
- Kali:** The Goddess of the Universe.

ROMEO BECOMES A *śadhu*

[As the curtain rises we behold Lord Shiva, sitting on a rock on the edge of the stage on the far left side. He remains in meditation throughout the entire play, never opening his eyes or moving a muscle. Directly behind him on the stage is a very large Shiva Lingam. Then, Narada, the great 'Prankster Sage,' together with the young Lord Rama (12 - 14 years old), come in from stage right.]

Narada: *[telling a story]* Finally, the Goddess of the Universe appeared before Sudhamani in a living form, dazzling like a million suns, and merged into her. From that day forth, Sudhamani revealed herself to be the full embodiment of that supreme Goddess. As she says, she could no longer see anything as different from her own formless Self, in which the entire Universe floats like a tiny bubble! OM Amriteshwaryai Namaha! But did she then withdraw from humanity, to revel in bliss undisturbed? No! She began tirelessly serving all who came to her, showering her infinite Love and compassion upon the suffering multitudes, becoming known to the wide world as Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, one of the greatest Saints of all time! Oh, who can begin to fathom the greatness of her compassion, her divine Love? *[sings]*
Ammé! Ammé! Amritanandamayi!

Rama: More, Narada! Another story about Amma!

Narada: With joy, Rama. Ah! This is a story about the incredible power of Amma's Grace. It's called *Romeo Becomes a Sadhu*. But this time, I'll not only tell the story—I'll show it!

[On the far side of the stage, Krishna enters with His consort, Radha. Krishna is playing the flute, while Radha dances in ecstasy around him, finally coming to rest on His arm in a classic pose. Five or six Gopis, beautiful cowherd girls, enter, each one calling a different name of Krishna all at once. 'Gopala, Govinda, Mukunda, Madhava!'¹ They fall at Krishna's feet with intense love.]

Krishna: So, let's dance!

[Music, Vrindavana Ke Sundara Bala, begins, and a passionate dance unfolds, Krishna giving each Gopi some intimate moments, the Gopis imagining the other Gopis are Krishna. About a minute after the dance has begun, a new Gopi, Myrna, arrives. She is different from the others, older, awkward, her sari tied very strangely. She looks at her watch.]

Myrna: Darn! Late again!

[She rushes over to join the dance, but though it is obvious she loves Krishna, she doesn't seem to know the steps, and keeps tripping and missing Krishna's embrace. She seems to be more comfortable with disco-style dancing. At one point she steps in some cow dung. As the dance ends, all the Gopis are bowing at Krishna's feet, but Myrna has fallen away from the dance and is looking quite miserable. Krishna glances at Myrna, and whispers something to Radha.]

Krishna: *[to the Gopis]* Come, dear ones! To the river for a swim! *[Krishna then runs off with the Gopis; Radha comes over to Myrna.]*

Radha: What's wrong, Myrna?

Myrna: *[miserable]* Oh, Radha. This Gopi thing just ain't working out!

¹These are all names of Lord Krishna.

Radha: *[embraces Myrna]* Don't be too hard on yourself, darling. You're doing beautifully. You'll make a wonderful Gopi.

Myrna: But I'm such a klutz. I'll never fit in. I don't know how this whole thing happened, but I'm startin' to think it was just a big cosmic boo-boo. I mean, two months ago, it was 1972, I was in Long Island, cleaning some lady's attic, and I found this old book—and inside was a picture of Krishna. That picture like took over my whole life—I couldn't get His face out of my head. Night and day I kept hearing this far-out flute. I thought I was going crazy! Finally I said to myself, Myrna, you take that little nest egg you got saved up, and fly to India—just see the land where Krishna lived. Maybe that'll get this thing out your system. So I found a real cheap flight, over the Bermuda Triangle—special discount! And halfway through the flight, suddenly the plane like flips over and starts spinning around. Everybody threw up! And then everything seems to be OK, only I look around and I'm not even in a plane anymore, I'm flying through the air on some kinda chariot made a flowers. We're being pulled by some pink horses... *[Theme music from The Twilight Zone is heard.]* I'm freakin' out! I mean it was like something out of "The Twilight Zone!" *[Radha and Myrna freeze]*

Narada: *[imitating Rod Serling]* Meet Myrna. Drawn by the inexorable power of a blue boy from ages past, she was inspired to take a flight to India, just as a tourist—or so she thought. Journeying not just through space, but through time and across cultures... *[Final note of The Twilight Zone theme is heard.]* ...into the Twilight Zone.

Myrna: *[Myrna and Radha come out of freeze]* And so we land in a field, and the next thing I know, Krishna himself's standing in front of me, arms outstretched... I guess he knew I needed a hug real bad...

Radha: Yes, I saw. And now, you're becoming a Gopi.

Myrna: Tryin' to.

Radha: You've been given a very special blessing, Myrna. Don't worry. It will all work out.

Myrna: I don't think so, Radha. The other Gopis grew up doing pujas, they know all the dances backwards and forwards. But me? Not only did I lead a worldly life, I was a schlep from day one! I'll never catch on.

Radha: Don't worry about the externals, darling—what Krishna sees is the heart. You must have some spiritual tendencies. Didn't you do any devotional practices in America?

Myrna: Nothin! The only thing I ever did with devotion was eat. My specialty was the french-fry puja—you know, dip it in the ketchup chakra, offer it to the lotus taste buds, repeat the sacred syllable "YUMMM". *[on the verge of tears]* I hate to say it, Radha, but I think my chosen deity was Ronald McDonald. I just don't think I'm cut out for this Gopi thing. Don't get me wrong, I love cows... But frankly, I like 'em best a quarter pound at a time.

Radha: Myrna!

Myrna: I'm sorry, Radha, but I didn't grow up in this culture! I don't know anything about spirituality! The television was my guru—I'm a couch potato, not a

milkmaid! These girls all grew up chanting the names of God—the only name I ever chanted with devotion was ‘Ringo, Ringo.’

Radha: Ringo?

Myrna: Kind of embarrassing now.

Narada: Just goes to show you, worldly love is blind and also deaf!

Rama: *[scolding]* Narada...

Radha: But surely you had some awareness of the sacred goal of life?

Myrna: I hate to admit it, Radha, but the only goal of my life was to find the perfect guy.

Radha: Well, you’ve certainly succeeded in that!

Myrna: Yeah, but with all these Gopis around him, how can I get close to him? I don’t wanna be a groupie—I want him all to myself!

Radha: The intimacy you want will come in time, Myrna. Offer him your whole heart and mind, and pray constantly for more devotion. The more you surrender, the closer to him you’ll be. The mantra is a big help with that—have you been saying the mantra Krishna gave you?

Myrna: When I remember to, which is about twice a day. I don’t even hear Krishna’s name in it—OM Amriteshwaryai Namaha.

Radha: Oh Myrna, you’re very fortunate! He’s given you a mantra to Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, the Universal Mother, one of the greatest divine Incarnations of all time! He must have wanted you to develop divine compassion, and devotion, and selfless service, for she is the supreme embodiment of these qualities! Oh, Amma, I love you so!

Myrna: In that case, I'll keep that mantra on my tongue like a lollipop! But listen, I'm so impure inside—it's a losin' battle. I'm like a jar that's had pickles in it for twenty years. No matter how many times you wash it, it's still gonna smell.

Radha: Not true! Krishna's Love is a special cleanser, which can scrub you clean in a very short time. But you've got to hold still, and allow him to do the cleaning. Just do your best to serve in any way you can...

Myrna: I want to, Radha, but I've gotta tell you, I'm *useless* with the cows, I really am. Is there some other way I can help?

Radha: As a matter of fact, Krishna has a special job for you. Some devotees in one of His future incarnations need help. It's a difficult task, but if you succeed, it'll clear away many obstacles in your way. Interested?

Myrna: I'll do anything to become one with him...!

Radha: Wonderful! All right, we'll have to leave Vrindavan for a while, and do a bit of astral travel. Are you ready?

Myrna: You mean we're gonna fly? Like on *The Flying Nun*?

Radha: Something like that. *[touches her finger to Myrna's forehead; a harp playing Somewhere Over the Rainbow; two small angels come in carrying clouds, and stand on either side of them, as escorts. Behind them the stage crew is setting up the Italy set.]*

Myrna: Wow! Where are we? In heaven?

Radha: Sort of...

Myrna: *[sees stage crew]* Who are those guys?

Radha: That's the divine stage crew.

Myrna: Cool! Hey, look! *[pointing down]* A rainbow! I always wanted to be somewhere over the rainbow! *[An Elvis Presley song, Love Me Tender, is heard]* Radha, who's that? Is that ELVIS? Is he up here? Oh, oh, can we see him, PLEASE, can we, can we?

Radha: Darling, that's just *Indra's* radio.² Elvis has already reincarnated.

Myrna: Really? On earth? Can we visit him? *[puts on lipstick]*

Radha: Well, let's see. Where *has* he taken birth? I see a farm, a barn... *[song fades out, sound of a cow mooing is heard]* Uh-oh. *[to audience]* He's being milked. *[to Myrna]* I don't think it's such a good idea, Myrna. Krishna's work is waiting.

Myrna: *[disappointed]* Oh, OK. I guess I should turn all my love to Krishna anyway.

Radha: That's the idea. We're coming back to earth now, Myrna. Are you ready?

Myrna: Ready!

Radha: *[They hop and 'land'.]* Perfect landing.

[The angels exit. Behind Radha and Myrna are a couple of set-pieces suggesting the outline of a monk's hermitage center stage, including a door on the stage right side. Inside the hermitage, there is a kitchen area on the left, a meditation platform in the back, and an elaborate altar on the right. In front of the hermitage, there is a sign pointing to the hermitage, saying, "Monk's Hermitage. Be Quiet!" Another sign on stage left side saying, "Dive at your own risk!," and a sign on the right side saying, "Danger! 1,000 foot drop!"]

Myrna: Where are we?

Radha: A volcanic mountaintop in Italy, 1994.

Myrna: Huh?

² *Indra*: the ruler of Heaven.

Radha: *[points stage right]* See the lake? Careful—twenty foot drop-off into deep water. *[goes to other side of stage]* And be VERY careful over there, darling. Thousand foot drop off onto jagged rocks. *[points to hermitage]* And this is where the devotees live. At any rate, the one standing is a devotee. *[laughs]*
The one meditating thinks he’s beyond devotion!

[Rameshio, a dour looking man in his mid-40’s, is engaged in a willful looking meditation. He is an extremely arrogant and immature practitioner of the jnana path, the path of wisdom. Durga Prem³, a sincere devotee of Amma, and follower of the bhakti path, is cooking dinner, while singing.]

Durga Prem: *[sings]* Durge, Durge, Durge Jai Jai Ma! Durge... *[He suddenly has a vision of Amma. Spoken]* Oh God, Amma! Yes, Mother, I see. One of Your children? Coming here? Romeo? Yes, of course! Of course we will. Amma, don’t go! Please, take me with you! Amma! *[falls to his knees. After a lengthy pause]*
Well, Rameshio, it looks like we’re going to have a guest for dinner. One of Amma’s children is coming.

Rameshio: *[angry]* Another “vision” I suppose? Must you continually disturb my meditation with your fantasies?

[Romeo comes on, chased by two demons, Chandio and Mundio.]

Chandio: We’ll get you, Romeo, you rat! You’ll never live to see our cousin again!

Mundio: *[Mundio pops out in front of Romeo]* Blaah!

Romeo: Oh, God! *[The demons surround Romeo.]*

Chandio: Now we got him! Charge! *[They rush towards Romeo. At the last moment, Romeo steps back, and the demons end up embracing each other.]*

³ The author played the role of Durga Prem.

Mundio: I got him, Chandio!

Chandio: You idiot! It's me you got! *[They fall over.]*

Durga Prem: *[opens hermitage door]* Romeo! In here! Hurry! *[Romeo runs into the hermitage. Rameshio screams in a high pitched voice and runs to kitchen area and grabs a pan to use as a weapon.]*

Romeo: Lock the door, quick! *[Durga Prem locks the door; Chandio tries to get door open, pounds on it.]*

Chandio: Curses!

Romeo: *[to Rameshio and Durga Prem]* How strong is this door, anyway?

Rameshio: Very strong. I made it myself, to keep people like you out!

Durga Prem: Don't worry. You'll be protected here Romeo.

Romeo: That's what you say.

Chandio: I got it, Mundio! We'll get a stick to bash in the door! We'll show that filthy rat to run off with our cousin!

Mundio: But boss! What if we can't find the house again?

Chandio: There's a sign, knucklehead! C'mon! *[They go running out.]*

Romeo: *[to Durga Prem, suspicious]* Hey! How'd you know my name?

Durga Prem: The Divine Mother told me.

Romeo: The Divine Mother? Get real.

Durga Prem: I'm not kidding.

Romeo: Get outa here! *[steps on one foot, winces]* Ah! Sprained my ankle running up that path.

Durga Prem: Well, sit down. We've got some Tiger Balm over here somewhere.

Radha: [*“Mission Impossible” music is heard*] Your job, Myrna, will be to keep the demons from getting inside the hermitage.

Myrna: You’re kidding!

Radha: But don’t worry, I’m giving you these magic earrings, which Krishna has blessed with the power of invisibility, so the demons won’t be able to see you. [*puts earrings on Myrna*] However, there’s one condition. No talking, or you’ll lose the power. Do you understand?

Myrna: I guess so.

Radha: I’m going to leave you now, Myrna, but I’ll give you guidance from the astral plane. Remember, where there is real Love, there is no separation. [*Radha exits*]

Narada: ‘This tape will self-destruct in five seconds.’ [*“Mission Impossible” music ends.*]

Myrna: May the Force be with me...

Rameshio: [*to Romeo, cautiously*] My name’s Rameshio. This is *my* hermitage.

Romeo: Rameshio, huh?

Rameshio: Yeah. And you are...?

Romeo: Romeo. Romeo Kowalski. Prizefighter, from Sicily.

Rameshio: Oh, terrific. [*to Durga Prem, threateningly*] You let him in—you keep an eye on him! [*Keeping the pan for protection, Rameshio sits in his meditation area, but keeps eyes on Romeo, while using a mala.*]

Romeo: So, what are you guys, crazy monks or something? Or just weirdos?

Durga Prem: Well, I'm certainly crazy about God, so I guess you could call me a crazy monk.
My name is Durga Prem.

Romeo: *[derisively]* What? *[sees the altar]* Hey, what the heck is this?

Durga Prem: It's our altar. Here, this is Kali, and Shiva. This is Jesus, of course, and the Buddha... And this is our Guru, Mata Amritanandamayi Devi.

Romeo: Oh man! Demons outside, lunatics in here. Your Guru, huh? Kinda like the tooth fairy?

Durga Prem: No. Here. *[shows him another picture]* We call her Amma. She's an incarnation of God.

Romeo: Yeah, sure. And I'm Attila the Hun.

Durga Prem: Might have been. *[begins putting an ace bandage on Romeo's ankle]*
Rameshio, I'm busy with this bandage. You wanna check the rice?

Rameshio: *[annoyed]* If I must. *[gets up from meditation, prepares to serve dinner]*

Durga Prem: So Romeo, if you don't mind telling me, who are those guys out there? Why were they chasing you?

Romeo: Well, it's kind of a sad story. See, I fell in love with a beautiful girl... and then everything started going downhill. Her name is Julia... *[getting emotional]* Oh, Julia! How could you leave me?

Durga Prem: *[to Rameshio]* Romeo and Julia?? I smell a tragedy.

Romeo: Oh, Julia! *[sobs]*

Rameshio: *[disgusted]* Oh, brother!

Durga Prem: I don't mean to pry, Romeo, but I still don't get why those guys are chasing you.

Romeo: Julia's parents hate me cause I'm only half Italian. Those goons are Julia's Mafia cousins, Chandio and Mundio, come to get me! Her whole family's demonic except her. The worst part of the whole thing is, Julia got tired of waiting for me, and ran off with some rotten idiot football player. *[starts sobbing]* Oh, Julia, darlin, how could you?

Durga Prem: Sounds painful, Romeo.

Rameshio: *[serving dinner]* Here, eat! No sobbing into the food!

Durga Prem: *[blessing the food]* OM Sri Gurubhyo Namaha, Hari OM.⁴

Romeo: I'll give her one week. If she don't come back to me, wherever she is, I'll hunt 'em down and kill 'em both!

Durga Prem: Uh-oh.

Rameshio: True love!

Durga Prem: Just like Amma says, that's the nature of worldly love—if the other person doesn't fulfill your desires, it turns to hatred! Can it really be called 'love'?

Rameshio: Obviously not!

Durga Prem: *[carefully]* Romeo, you know, if you try to take revenge, it's just gonna lead to more suffering. You've gotta try to forgive.

Romeo: Forgive that football brain? Never! But I don't wanna hurt my darlin'. Oh, sweetheart, please come back to me! *[sobs]*

Rameshio: This is nauseating! *[Gets up and takes his food back to the meditation area.]*

Durga Prem: *[takes Amma's picture from altar, shows it to Romeo]* Here guy. I have a magic pill for you. Look at this picture for five seconds, and see if you can stay

⁴ a *mantra* in praise of the Guru.

miserable. [*Romeo looks at picture, some harp music is heard, and he breaks into a smile.*] How d'ya feel? Better?

Romeo: [*surprised*] Yeah. Much better.

Durga Prem: Works every time.

Romeo: So listen—um, who is this lady anyway?

Durga Prem: Well, she's an Avatar, a divine Incarnation.

Romeo: What's that supposed to mean? [*begins eating ravenously*]

Durga Prem: Well, Romeo, as I understand it, she was born divine, in full awareness of the supreme Reality, but she performed intense spiritual practices just to set an example for the world. She was so full of love for God that she merged into God, maybe like a sugar crystal dissolving in an ocean of milk. What it comes down to is, Amma's no longer just a person—she is one with the Creator of all. She knows every thought in your mind at all times.

Romeo: Get out.

Durga Prem: I'm serious. More important is her divine Love, Romeo. You've got to feel it to believe it.

Romeo: Come on! She's prob'ly just one a them... [*looking at Amma's picture*] Wow, she's got some eyes though.

Durga Prem: She sure does! And I'll tell you, that light never dims. I've been with her for six years, Romeo, spent thousands of hours in her presence, and I'm sure she's a divine Being, a living Christ, taken birth to uplift the world. [*Romeo scoffs*] She's been working miracles all her life.

Romeo: [*very skeptical*] Miracles?? Yeah right! Name *one*!

Durga Prem: Alright. One day, when the word first started getting out about her being divine, a huge crowd of skeptics gathered to see if she could work a miracle. Amma asked one of the skeptics to bring a small pot of water. Then she said, “Stir it with your finger.” When he did, the water turned into milk.

Romeo: C’mon.

Durga Prem: Then she said, “Stir it again,” and this time it turned into sweet pudding. And she passed out samples of the pudding to everyone—hundreds of people—and the pot remained full to the brim.

Romeo: Get outa here.

Durga Prem: There’s thousands of stories, Romeo. She’s even brought people back from the dead. All I can tell you is—just being in her presence is a miraculous experience. The whole atmosphere gets saturated with her Love. There’s no doubt in my mind, she’s an incarnation of God. *[Romeo examines altar again.]*

Narada: *[to Rama, excited]* Just like Sri Krishna and Jesus and the Buddha—not to mention you, Rama! Oh, Amma, supreme Incarnation of Love...!

Romeo: *[to Durga Prem]* Ya know what I think? You’ve got a few big screws loose!
[Chandio and Mundio come running through the audience carrying a big stick.]

Mundio: *[to Chandio]* Oh boy, oh boy! We’ll get him now! Can I kill him, boss?
PLEASE??

Chandio: We’ll take turns killing him, like we always do. Now c’mon!

Durga Prem: Uh-oh. I think those demons are back.

[All of Radha’s lines from here on are from the astral plane.]

Radha: *[offstage echo-mike]* Myrna. It's me, Radha. Turn the sign around, quick!
[Myrna goes over to sign saying "Monk's Hermitage, Be Quiet!," and points it away from the house and towards the diving cliff.]

Chandio: Ready, Mundio? *[shouting]* One...

Chandio & Mundio: ...two, three, Death to Romeo! *[They run towards the house.]*

Chandio: *[sees sign]* Hold it! Something's fishy here. The arrow's pointing the other way!

Mundio: Duh, maybe Romeo *sold* the house, boss.

Chandio: No, idiot! The right house must be in *this* direction. C'mon! Ready? One...

Chandio & Mundio: ...two, three *[Mundio says "four" instead of three]*, Death to Romee-aaahh!
[They run off the diving cliff, yelling. Two loud splashes are heard.]

Radha: *[offstage echo-mike]* Well done, Myrna!

Durga Prem: Sounds like they've gone. Amma said she'd protect us.

Romeo: *[looks at altar]* So what's this Amma lady into, some kinda Hinduism? With all those crazy gods running around? C'mon!

Durga Prem: She's come *through* Hinduism, yes, but she's not limited to any religion, Romeo; she's a divine Incarnation—she belongs to the whole world. And you know, the essence of Hinduism is not that there are many gods, but that there is one Supreme Being, from whom all forms emerge. The various deities are just different aspects of that one Supreme Being. You follow me?

Romeo: Yeah, I ain't stupid, ya know. I thought about some a these things.

Durga Prem: Whether you have or not doesn't matter. Under that leather skin of yours, I can see, there's a heart of gold. Amma showed me in a vision, you have the potential to become a great devotee.

Romeo: Yeah, well, you're obviously bonkers!

Rameshio: *[rises from 'meditation']* Listen, Romeo, the most important teaching in Hinduism is that the Supreme Being is actually your own true Self. Through various practices, you can eventually come into the direct realization of your own Divinity. To attain that realization is the goal of life.

Romeo: *[confrontative]* Now wait a second. What're you sayin'—I'm God?

Durga Prem: Rameshio, I don't think the jnana stuff is gonna work here. Devotion is definitely his path...

Rameshio: *[long suffering]* Yes, you're probably right. *[condescending]* Never mind, Romeo. *[goes over to kitchen area to do the dishes]*

Durga Prem: Listen, the essence of Amma's teaching is this. 'Turn all your love to God and serve him and love him within all. Eventually, through that love, you can merge in God forever!' You do have some faith in God, don't you Romeo?

Romeo: Well, I don't know. When I was a child I went to church, but I guess I just got tired a hearing what a sinner I was. I mean, that was obvious—a fighter like me! Everybody in church seemed to think I was gonna roast in hell forever. And maybe it's true, but I don't want to keep hearing about it. Nobody wants to spend eternity on a shish kebob!

Durga Prem: Well, that's one thing I love about Hinduism, Romeo—nobody's stuck in hell forever. In fact, every soul is ultimately destined for God-Realization.

Romeo: Really? That's encouraging! Now wait a second—everybody? What about Hitler?

Durga Prem: Eventually, in some future incarnation, yes. Even Hitler.

Romeo: No way, man!

Durga Prem: Listen, Romeo, you don't need to agree with my concepts. All you need to do is to start turning your love to God. Everything will follow from there.

Rameshio: *[annoyed]* Excuse me, but I hardly think devotion alone can do it, Durga Prem. Liberation lies in wisdom, in the knowledge that I and God are one.

Romeo: So, you and God are one, huh? Sounds mighty egotistical to me!

Rameshio: It might sound that way, but actually, to remember that your true Self is divine is one of the best ways to eradicate the ego altogether. I have a meditation image that might help you understand what I'm talking about. Interested?

Romeo: Hey, I'm open.

Rameshio: Good! Sit down, close your eyes, relax. *[Romeo sits]* Relax! *[angrily shouting]* **RELAX!** *[arrogantly teaching]* Now first of all, imagine an infinite rock, a rock so big ten billion universes could fit in one tiny speck of it. *[to Durga Prem]* This rock is the *Maha Shiva Lingam*⁵, the Atman, the divine Self of all beings. *[condescending]* With me, Romeo?

Romeo: Kind of like the rock a ages?

Rameshio: Please! *I'm* leading the meditation! Now, on a tiny surface of that infinite Rock, a movie is being shown. That movie is the Universe, OK? The realm of duality. Now, as human beings, we are like tiny molecules of granite on the surface of that Rock. Although our consciousness actually belongs to the entirety of the

⁵ *Maha*: prefix meaning 'great.'

divine Rock, we've gotten caught up in the movie, and identified ourselves with a little speck of color in the film. We've gotten so concerned about that little shadow, that we've forgotten about the Rock completely! Although our true Self is the infinite eternal Spirit, we've come to believe we're separate little characters in the movie of time, born to die. You with me?

Romeo: I guess so...

Rameshio: Now, to find eternal peace, all you need to do is turn your back on the movie, and allow yourself to penetrate deep into the depths of the divine Rock, into that changeless Atmic Consciousness behind the mind. Say, 'I am not a person! Who am I?' And follow that 'I' back into the rock of pure Awareness. And what happens? The movie, and all its suffering, disappears completely! Finally the vacillating mind becomes stilled, and our infinite identity is permanently revealed. Bingo! Self Realization! [*proudly*] Not bad, eh Durga Prem? Well, Romeo, what do you think?

Romeo: [*Romeo shrugs audibly.*] This God junk ain't for me. Too dry. All rock and no roll, know what I mean?

Rameshio: Well, of course, not everyone has the mental capacity to conceptualize such things...

Romeo: [*bristling*] Hey! Callin' me stupid? [*Romeo puts up his fists to fight with Rameshio. Durga Prem stands between them to prevent a fight.*]

Durga Prem: OK, don't worry about it, Romeo. Rameshio's way is not for us. His path is of the mind, but ours is of the heart. As Amma says, "Knowledge without devotion is like chewing stones." We just need to keep on loving God.

Rameshio: Yes, but she also says, “Devotion without knowledge won’t set you free!” Right? Of course, your path is fine, if you don’t mind being stuck in samsara for a few hundred more lifetimes.

Durga Prem: C’mon, Rameshio. Amma says devotion’s the best path for almost everybody in this age. You’re not that familiar with her teachings yet—you’ve had only two *darshans*, right? You’ve barely had a chance to look at her...

Rameshio: I have no use for *darshans*. People of my caliber don’t need a Guru. [*looking admiringly at himself in a hand mirror, touching up his hair*]

Durga Prem: What? Rameshio, the Guru is essential for *every* spiritual seeker!

Narada: [*to Rama*] Rameshio’s worshipping his beloved deity, see?⁶ Strange bird, that one. Strong intellect, but hasn’t surrendered at all.

Rama: Not even to Amma? Then he’s got a long way to go!

Narada: That’s right!

Romeo: [*sobbing*] Aw Julia, how could you leave me?

Chandio: [*offstage, yelling*] Knucklehead! Don’t you even know how to tie a knot?

Durga Prem: Listen, Romeo, as long as those demons are out there, you’re welcome to take shelter here, right Rameshio? We’ve got plenty of food stored away...

Romeo: Oh, Julia... how could you?

Rameshio: Oh, really! [*to Durga Prem*] What d’ya invite him to stay for?? He’ll ruin the vibrations completely. I’ll start having visions of Julia!

Durga Prem: C’mon, he’s Amma’s child.

Rameshio: Well, according to you, so is every hedgehog in the forest. I don’t want them all in my hermitage!

⁶ In other words, Rameshio is worshipping his own reflection in the mirror.

Durga Prem: So what am I supposed to do, send him out to his death? Sometimes I wonder what's the point of all your "I am Brahman" meditations, unless you make some effort to see that everyone else is also Brahman!

Rameshio: *[icy]* How dare you. I don't know what Amma had in mind in suggesting you join me here, but frankly you don't seem to be ready for any of what I have to teach! *[storms back to his meditation area, sits]*

Durga Prem: Maybe we're both learning from each other? *[Rameshio huffs]*

Romeo: *[sobbing]* Oh, Julia!

Rameshio: *[to Romeo]* Will you SHUT UP?

Durga Prem: Boy, Romeo, you have a tremendous amount of love in your heart. It's a beautiful thing.

Romeo: Only adds up to suffering!

Durga Prem: Not necessarily—if you can turn all your love to God, you could become a Saint in this very lifetime.

Romeo: Oh please. It's more likely I'll end up in jail. I'm just a big heap a lust and anger.

Durga Prem: Many Saints were like that in their youth. Saint Francis for one. Another is Valmiki, who was a highway robber before he started chanting the divine name. Surrender to God is the key, Romeo. If you do, big changes can happen fast. Amma says if we surrender completely and do all the practices she recommends, God-Realization is guaranteed within four years! But if you're *really* surrendered, she can give it in one second!

Romeo: Cut the mumbo jumbo. Don't you understand?! I'm gettin' desperate! *[In a fit of rage, Romeo lifts Durga Prem up onto his shoulders and starts spinning around.]*

Durga Prem: *[while spinning around]* That's actually a very good place to be in Romeo. Desperation is one of the best doors there is to God. Now that you're at the door, all ya gotta do is knock, and start praying to God to open up and let you in!

Romeo: *[puts Durga Prem down]* Get outa here. I don't know how to pray no more! The only prayin' I do is with my fists! I'm gonna clobber those guys! *[Chandio and Mundio enter noisily. They are tied together at the knees with six feet of rope. Chandio is carrying a club, Mundio is carrying a bucket full of mud.]*

Chandio: Got it? When he opens the door, I pull him out, he'll trip over the rope. Then I'll hit him, and you dump the mud on his face. Rub it in good! Then we'll chop off his head, and throw his body over the cliff!

Mundio: Oh boy, oh boy!

Durga Prem: Uh-oh.

Radha: *[offstage echo-mike]* Use the mud, Myrna!

Chandio: READY?

Mundio: I sure is!

Chandio: *[knocks on door]* Special delivery! Box a chocolates for Mr. Romeo Kowalski. Gift from one Julia. *[Romeo gets up and reaches for the doorknob.]*

Durga Prem: Romeo! It's the demons!

Romeo: But what if she's had a change a heart? *[Romeo starts to unlock the door; Durga Prem jumps up and holds on to him.]*

Chandio: *[knocks again]* Special delivery! Open up! *[Myrna scoops a handful of mud from Mundio's bucket, and throws it in Chandio's face. Since Myrna is invisible, Chandio thinks Mundio has done it.]*

Chandio: *[furious]* Mundio—whadya do dat for?

Mundio: I didn't do nuttin! *[Chandio shoves Mundio's face into the bucket of mud. Mundio grabs Chandio's club and threatens him.]*

Chandio: Oh you would, would you? *[takes club from Mundio, and chases him over to the diving cliff, and shoves him off. But since they are tied together at the knees, Chandio is also pulled over the edge. They scream on the way down. Two splashes are heard.]*

Radha: *[offstage echo-mike]* Well done, Myrna!

Durga Prem: Whew! Sounds like they're gone! You know, Romeo, demons only have power if you give 'em power. If you let 'em, lust and anger can destroy your life, but if you turn your mind to God, and do battle with your desires, the demons don't have a chance.

Romeo: Easy for you to say, 'do battle with your desires.' Look atcha—you don't have any!

Durga Prem: Not true. I've offered them all to God, that's all. I just remember that worldly desire leads to suffering, and that all I really want is God—and then I pray until the desire disappears. It's pretty easy now, but when I was eighteen, I was full of desire. And I got into a heap a trouble, too, a lot like you.

Romeo: *[skeptical]* That's hard to believe.

Durga Prem: Amma's Grace saved me, Romeo. In return, I'm giving my whole life to her service.

Romeo: Yeah, well, I ain't giving my life to nobody. Why should I?

Durga Prem: Simple—she can lead you all the way to God-Realization.

Romeo: Yeah, but I'm just not cut out for that kinda stuff. Me, a Saint? Impossible!

Durga Prem: It's not impossible! All you have to do is set your sights on the goal, and one step at a time start moving in that direction.

Romeo: I wouldn't last more than a couple a days. Believe me, I'm a sinner to the core.

Durga Prem: You're not a sinner! You're a holy child of God.

Romeo: You don't understand! I *like* sin.

Durga Prem: *[laughing]* That's only because you've never tasted Amma's Love. Once you do... Here, here's something I bet you can get into. Imagine for a second a delicious pizza, OK? Golden brown crust, covered with rich homemade tomato sauce, smothered with the world's finest mozzarella, studded with mushrooms, peppers, onions, sprinkled with fresh oregano, and baked to perfection.

Romeo: *[frantic]* You guys don't have a phone do ya? Nah, they wouldn't deliver up here anyway. Go ahead.

Durga Prem: OK. Now imagine you've got a big juicy slice of that pizza in front of you. Now pick it up and take a bite—go ahead—and baby, it's perfect. It's like one flavor after another cascading over your tongue, filling your whole being with indescribable pleasure...

Romeo: *[really getting into it]* Oh man! Ya know, they *might* deliver up here...

Durga Prem: Now, just to give you an idea—that incredible pizza is a *little bit* like Amma’s Love. Only Amma’s Love lasts forever—and no matter how much you have, you never get tired of it.

Romeo: Yo! Maybe this Guru thing’s for me after all! [*Rameshio rises, listens to them.*]

Durga Prem: There ya go! Now the thing is, once you’ve tasted Amma’s Love, the pleasures of the world will seem like nothing but some cheap, frozen, grocery store pizza, with a crust like cardboard, fake cheese and moldy mushrooms!

Romeo: Yuck!

Durga Prem: Now you’re getting it!

Rameshio: [*sarcastic*] What path are you teaching him now? Pasta Yoga? [*Chandio and Mundio enter. Chandio is now dressed as a woman. Mundio is carrying a big fishing net and a large saw.*]

Chandio: Remember, when he comes out, throw the net over him. I’ll hit him, then you can saw him up. OK?

Mundio: Oh boy, oh boy!

Chandio: [*in woman’s voice*] Help! Romeo! It’s me, Julia! My cousins have captured me! [*Chandio pounds his foot on stage, making sound of a blow*] OW! [*Chandio pounds foot again*] OW! Oh Romeo! Help! Rescue me and I’ll be yours forever.

Romeo: That’s not the real Julia!

Chandio: [*in woman’s voice*] Oh Romeo, daaaaahling!

Mundio: [*laughing*] Say boss, you’s kinda cute. If this don’t work out, maybe you’s and me should get married. [*laughs*]

Radha: *[offstage echo-mike]* Go ahead, Myrna. Marry them. *[Myrna sneaks up, takes the net out of Mundio's hands]*

Chandio: *[woman's voice]* Oh save me! *[Myrna shoves Mundio into Chandio. Mundio accidentally embraces Chandio. Myrna throws the fish net over both of them.]*

Chandio: *[in woman's voice]* You idiot! You've blown it again! *[They wrestle, arguing. Myrna grabs the net, and gradually drags them over towards the diving cliff.]*

Mundio: But somebody pushed me, boss!

Chandio: A likely story! *[A famous wedding march is heard.]*

Narada: Chandio and Mundio, I now pronounce you demon and wife. You may kick the bride. *[Mundio kicks Chandio. Chandio yelps.]*

Mundio: He said I could, boss!

Chandio: Why you! *[Wedding music ends on a foul note. Myrna pushes them over the cliff. Two splashes are heard.]*

Radha: *[offstage echo-mike]* Nicely done, darling.

Romeo: I wasn't fooled for a second.

Rameshio: Perhaps that divine rock image is helping you to gain some discrimination at last.

Romeo: Real proud of your dopey image, aren't ya. Well, you may be made a stone, but not me. *[laughs]* Now maybe I coulda got into that image if like in the middle a the rock there was a beautiful woman waitin' for me or somethin. Like it or not, that's where I'm at.

Durga Prem: That's a great idea! Seriously, Romeo, I think the best thing you could do is imagine that God is an incredibly beautiful, divine woman. And just fall totally in love with her. If you can win her heart, she's all yours.

Rameshio: *[disgusted]* Oh, really!

Romeo: You mean I can do that?! It's not a sin or somethin'?

Durga Prem: It's a perfectly legitimate path to God. *[shows him a picture of Durga]* See? People have been worshipping God in the form of a beautiful woman for thousands of years.

Romeo: Hey. Now THIS I can relate to! You sure God don't mind?

Durga Prem: I'm sure! As Amma says, "When we fall in love with the Universal Mother, we don't fall, we rise in Love." Our mind gradually becomes pure, and finally she lets us merge in her forever.

Romeo: Sounds good to me! *[to picture, in a French accent]* Say, Goddess! Don't I know you from somewhere? *[to Durga Prem, without accent]* I have a feeling I'm gonna be good at this!

Durga Prem: Me too!

Rameshio: *[to Durga Prem]* Why in the world are you feeding him such nonsense?!

Durga Prem: It's not nonsense—don't you see it's the only way for him?

Romeo: *[to picture, in French accent]* What's a nice Goddess like you doing in a picture frame like zees? How about getting three dimensional for old Romeo?

Rameshio: *[disgusted]* What is this, a French singles bar?

Durga Prem: If he can turn all his desires to God that way, he'll soon be transformed into a pure devotee.

Romeo: *[to picture, in French accent]* Well, what are you waiting for, Mama? Take me, I'm yours!

Rameshio: *[furious]* I don't want that energy in my space!

Durga Prem: Try to be patient with him. Most people need a personal God who they can love. Might be good for you too, Rameshio. The great blessing of an omniscient Guru like Amma is that she's a living, talking, *hugging* God. No matter what you may have done in the past, if you fall in love with her she can lead you all the way to Self-Realization.

Rameshio: I'm not interested in falling in love with anyone, thank you! And *excuse* me, but what's this nonsense about her being omniscient? Surely you don't think she knows every little detail in the Universe?

Durga Prem: She does. She knows *everything*. *[Rameshio scoffs]* You just haven't yet seen who she really is. She's God, Rameshio. She's not that body, she's the infinite Ocean of Consciousness, effortlessly conscious of every wave. It's not difficult for her to know everything—the whole of creation is within her!

Rameshio: But how can *she* be an Avatar? *[sarcastically]* Shouldn't she be blue? ⁷

Durga Prem: She's wearing a disguise, Rameshio, which allows us to grow close to her. But once you've fallen in love with her, she begins to remove the disguise, revealing more and more of her divine glory.

Rameshio: Oh, please. Why should she hide herself like that?

Durga Prem: Because her true form is shining like a million suns! As she says, if she revealed herself as she truly is, no one would be able to come near! *[Rameshio*

⁷ Shiva, Kali, Krishna and Rama, four of the Hindu deities, are usually depicted as being blue in skin color, signifying their infinite nature.

scoffs] Give me the benefit of the doubt for now, OK? The opportunity to have a personal relationship with an Avatar is incredible! And all you have to do is have the courage to choose it!

Rameshio: Well, Avatar or not, what difference is it to me? I am Brahman. Why should I bow down or surrender to anyone?

Durga Prem: Well, if that's your attitude, it's no wonder you haven't seen who she is. Arrogance is definitely an obstacle.

Rameshio: It's not arrogance! 'I am Brahman' is a profound Truth, uttered by the greatest sages.

Durga Prem: Sure, but they were speaking from direct experience of *being* Brahman. Just parroting 'I am Brahman' over and over is probably just going to increase your ego.

Rameshio: Another insult. Well, whether you're capable of understanding it or not, Brahman alone is real, and I am That. To affirm my oneness with God is simply to state the truth. I am Brahman! I am God! *[Romeo holds up a pin, showing it to the audience, and sneaks up behind Rameshio]* I am.... *[Romeo slightly pricks Rameshio's rear end with the pin. Rameshio leaps. In a high voice]* YOWWWWW! Why you filthy hedgehog! *[hiding under the kitchen table]* How dare you?

Romeo: *[laughing]* Just wanted to see if I could make God yell.

Rameshio: *[in a high voice]* Stay away from me, idiot, or I'll beat you to a pulp! *[Romeo backs off with a smile.]*

Durga Prem: No offense there, Rameshio, but Brahman doesn't get angry. If you were really one with Brahman, a little pinprick wouldn't bother you at all. You'd just see it as God's play, and remain in perfect peace.

Rameshio: Is that so?? *[comes out from under table]* Well I've just had it up to here with you and your arrogant insults! You should be bowing at my feet! *['feet' in falsetto]* Why I've read more books in the last year than you've probably read in your whole life! I built this hermitage with my own inheritance... But then you come and disturb my meditation with your stupid songs and delusional visions! *[long suffering]* Still, I'm doing my best to teach you the right path, but you don't have the least bit of respect for me! It's an outrage! Do you realize that during my travels in India I was known as Swami Jnanananda?⁸

Durga Prem: Really? Who gave you the initiation?

Rameshio: *[embarrassed]* Well, uh, actually, no one did. I just picked out the name myself. But all kinds of people used to touch my feet. *[a painful memory]* That is, until they found out.

Durga Prem: You mean you weren't really a Swami? What happened when they found out?

Rameshio: Well.... *[holding back tears]* The villagers ganged up on me. They threw my orange robes in a bonfire, poured cow-dung on my head and paraded me down the street in a sari.

Durga Prem: Whoa. Well, if it makes you feel any better, brother, another friend of mine got in trouble by choosing his own spiritual name. But you can see why it wouldn't go over too well at the ashram—'Haagen Dasz'. Look, Rameshio, don't get me wrong. I'm just hoping you can open up your heart a little.

⁸ The name means 'The bliss of Atmic wisdom.'

Rameshio: I've tried to open it! Don't you know I want to? But it's shut tight! And there's nothing you or anyone else can do about it! *[kneels in the corner, pulling at his hair.]*

Romeo: Uh, sorry about poking ya, there, Rameshio. Just a joke. Listen guys, I don't know nothin' about those two paths you been squawkin' about, but from all my years of datin' girls, I learned one thing—If you want to have a good time, you don't say 'I'm right and you're wrong.' You say, 'We're probly both right, from different angles.' So why don't you guys try putting your heads and your hearts together, and see if you can't come up with something new?

Durga Prem: Profound, Romeo. *[to Rameshio]* You know, brother, I think I owe you an apology. You're right, I never have taken your path seriously. But maybe now, if I want to move to a higher level, I should give what you're saying a try. I'm sorry.

Rameshio: No, it's me who should be apologizing. For all my big talk, I confess I haven't found any peace. I see that you have, and it burns me up. All these years, I've been afraid of surrendering, afraid to accept a Guru... My worst fear now is that despite all my sadhana, I haven't made any real progress. It's tormenting me night and day.

Romeo: Sounds like we all have some demons to face.

Rameshio: Listen, I need some time alone. I'm gonna go outside and pray.

Durga Prem: Outside?? But the demons...!

Rameshio: If Amma's who you say she is, she'll protect me.

Durga Prem: You're right, she will.

Rameshio: *[takes picture of Amma]* Gentlemen, OM Namah Shivaya.

Durga Prem: Namah Shivaya.

Romeo: Good luck. *[Rameshio opens the door and goes out of the cabin. To Durga Prem]* Not such a bad guy, ya know? Hey, I think I'll try a little a that meditation myself.

Durga Prem: Here, Romeo, try putting some sacred ash on your forehead—it's blessed by Amma. *[gives a large packet of ash to Romeo]* And put a little on your tongue, too.

Romeo: Yeah? *[Romeo puts some on his tongue, and then pours the whole packet onto his head and rubs it all over his face and body; clouds of vibhuti rise around him.]* Like this? *[coughs]* Ya sure?

Durga Prem: *[laughing]* Romeo, if that doesn't get ya, nothing will! *[Durga Prem and Romeo both sit to meditate.]*

Rameshio: *[Sets up picture of Amma near Shiva Lingam, bows, kneels in prayer.]* Amma, is it true? Are you an Avatar? If you are, I want to know it. Oh, Amma, please, won't you open my heart? Won't you show me who you are? Please, I'm desperate! Mother! *[He suddenly has a vision of Amma, starts crying]* Oh, Maaa! You *are* God! The Goddess! And You're everywhere! Amma, I surrender! This life belongs to You! Oh, pull me into the fire of Love! Engulf me in the flames of devotion! *[Chandio and Mundio enter, wearing fireman's hats. Seeing Rameshio, they sneak up behind him.]*

Radha: *[offstage echo-mike] Myrna, the demons... [Myrna runs over and taps Rameshio on the shoulder, Rameshio turns around and sees demons; he quickly rises]*

Rameshio: Demons, in the name of Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, incarnate Goddess of the Universe, BE GONE! *[The demons are terrified, and running backwards, they fall off the diving cliff; splashes are heard.]* Wow! That was easy! *[Rameshio picks up photo, knocks on hermitage door. Romeo opens door, Rameshio comes in.]*

Rameshio: *[embraces Romeo]* My dear divine brother!

Romeo: What the hey? *[Rameshio falls at Durga Prem's feet. Durga Prem lifts him up.]*

Durga Prem: Brother! I just tried your ocean image, the one you shared with me a few days ago—and the most fantastic thing happened!

Rameshio: Precious friend! I've had a vision of Amma! She's opened my heart! I've seen her all-pervading form.

Durga Prem: Really? Hallelujah! *[They embrace.]* Jai Ma!

Rameshio: *[after a moment]* So, you liked my Ocean image?

Durga Prem: It was mind blowing! I started by asking "Who am I?," the way you always say. Here, I'll do it this way. Romeo, who are you?

Romeo: Who am I? *[Myrna lies down and gradually falls asleep.]*

Durga Prem: First of all, you're not a person. You're not a separate little wave upon the divine Ocean. No. You are the entirety of the infinite Ocean of God—all pervading eternal bliss and peace, all embracing infinite Love. And as that

Ocean, you are the true Self within every single wave. Within all beings in the entire Universe, at all times, there is only you, the infinite Amma Self.

Rameshio: Yes, she is all...

Durga Prem: *[to Rameshio]* Now. You know how in stellar physics they say that all the light that gets sucked into a black hole in one universe might be blazing forth in another universe as a quasar?

Rameshio: OK... *[Theme music from Star Trek begins]*

Durga Prem: Well, all I can tell you is, my mind suddenly sank down to the very bottom of the Ocean, and it was like there was a black hole there, a force of Truth so powerful it instantly pulled me inside itself.

Rameshio: Shiva!

Durga Prem: And suddenly, my energy got drawn up the spine, and I burst forth from the crown chakra as the Goddess Kali, the quasar of divine Love, blazing in the sky above the Ocean of Shiva!

Romeo: Hey, now this I like!

Durga Prem: It is she who has created the innumerable beings upon the Ocean's surface. Why? Because she wants someone to Love!

Romeo: I know how she feels.

Durga Prem: Remember Romeo, this is you of whom I speak. For you are not the little wave called Romeo. You are Amma Kali, the Creator of the entire universal play! Yes, and it is you who are playing every role in the cosmic play as well! You, the doer of every single action; you playing both parts in every tender love scene.

Romeo: I like the sound a that!

Durga Prem: And it is you who will finally attain Enlightenment within every single soul.

Rameshio: Ahh.

Durga Prem: And yet beyond Shiva, Kali and the creation, beyond all names and forms, you are the supreme non-dual Self, the *Amma-Atman*, in which the entirety of God and the creation—all of eternity—has dissolved, like a tiny divine sugar-crystal.

Romeo: Wow, that's really something!

Durga Prem: Total union with Amma, forever and ever in absolute Oneness. Brahman. Yes, you *are* Brahman! *I* am Brahman! There is nothing but That!

Rameshio: A fusion of bhakti and jnana...

Durga Prem: All I can tell you is, at that point my mind became completely still, totally absorbed in the silence of the divine Self. Rameshio, I think you've given me the ticket to Liberation.

Rameshio: It's Amma who gave it. After the vision I saw tonight, all I want now is to love her and serve her with my entire being.

Romeo: Hey, sounds like you guys have really come together. Ya know what? *[scratching his head, vibhuti rises in a cloud]* I'm gettin' this funny feeling this Amma thing's for real. So ya know what? I ain't cryin' over what's her name no more! To heck with her—I'm gonna renounce the world and become a crazy monk, like you guys!

Durga Prem: Great, Romeo!

Rameshio: I'm impressed.

Romeo: I'll just move in here permanently!

Rameshio: That doesn't sound like such a great... [*Chandio and Mundio enter, stuffing cotton in their ears. Chandio is carrying a large bundle of dynamite, with a long fuse.*]

Romeo: Why not? I can chop wood for you and stuff—and you can teach me everything you know. We'll have a blast!

Chandio: [*pointing to his ear*] Stuff it in good, Mundio. If we hear that name again, we're doomed!

Mundio: [*didn't hear*] What??

Chandio: [*pulls cotton wad out of Mundio's ear*] I said keep your ears plugged!

Mundio: OK, boss. [*Chandio stuffs cotton back in Mundio's ear.*]

Durga Prem: [*hearing demons*] Uh-oh.

Chandio: [*forgetting that Mundio's ears are plugged*] And WHATEVER you do, don't light this thing 'til they open the door.

Mundio: [*due to earplugs, not hearing Chandio correctly*] Huh? Don't be a bore? OK.

Chandio: [*knocks on door*] Special Delivery! A dozen red roses for one Romeo. [*holds up the dynamite so the fuse is draped behind him. Mundio comes up behind Chandio and lights the fuse with a cigarette lighter; Chandio doesn't see that the fuse has been lit.*]

Radha: [*offstage echo-mike, urgently*] Myrna! Have *shraddha*⁹, darling! Wake up!
[*Myrna stirs from sleep, gradually wakes up.*]

Chandio: [*knocks again*] Roses for Mr. Romeo! Open up!

Mundio: Duh, hey boss, shouldn't we start runnin' pretty soon?

⁹ *Shraddha*: focused attention, faithful concentration.

Chandio: *[doesn't hear]* As a special bonus, we'll throw in a box a crackers for free!
[laughs, then sees the fuse is lit.] MUNDIO! YOU IDIOT! *[in a panic, he hands the dynamite to Mundio]* Here!

Mundio: *[hands it back, being very polite]* No thanks. *[Chandio shoves it back to Mundio; Mundio hands it back]* You keep it boss. *[They shove it back and forth several times in a panic. Finally Myrna runs over, yanks the dynamite out of their hands.]*

Myrna: You fools! *[She throws the dynamite over the big cliff. A huge explosion is heard.]*

Radha: *[offstage echo mike]* Oh, Myrna! You spoke! You've lost your invisibility!
[Myrna puts her hands over her mouth, but too late; the demons see her.]

Mundio: Look boss! A woman!

Chandio: Quick! Grab her!

Mundio: Oh boy, oh boy! *[grabs Myrna's hands; Myrna screams; Chandio pulls out a length of rope, ties her hands behind her back]*

Chandio: What luck! The perfect bait to lure out Romeo. *[pulls her over and ties her to a tree away from the hermitage]* Then we'll kill 'em both! *[Mundio is jumping up and down with excitement.]*

Myrna: Radha! Help! Somebody, please help me!

Romeo: Hey! Am I crazy, or is that a real woman?!

Myrna: The demons got me! My name is Myrna... *[Chandio pulls Mundio over towards the hermitage; they stand on either side of the door.]*

Rameshio: *[hearing Myrna's cries]* What in the world?

Durga Prem: You're right! They've caught somebody!

Myrna: Help!

Durga Prem: *[to Rameshio]* Come on, we've got to try to rescue her.

Rameshio: *[to Durga Prem]* Believe me, it's no problem. Just say Amma's name and they'll run!

Durga Prem: *[to Romeo]* Romeo, it's you they're after—stay inside. Come on, Rameshio!
[opens door and runs out towards Myrna. Mundio grabs Durga Prem from behind.] Amma!

Chandio: *[tying Durga Prem's hands behind his back]* Whoever he is, we got him!
[pulls Durga Prem over near Myrna and ties him to a tree; Mundio goes near door again]

Rameshio: *[goes out]* Demons, in the name of Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, be gone!

Chandio: *[points to the cotton in his ears, sticks his tongue out at Rameshio]* Nya, nya, nya, nya, nya, nya!

Durga Prem: The Name's not gonna work—they've got cotton in their ears! *[Mundio grabs Rameshio from behind. Chandio runs over and ties Rameshio's hands, leads him over near Durga Prem.]* Romeo! Don't come out or they'll get you too!
[To Rameshio] We'll just have to keep chanting. Amma's our only hope. OM Amriteshwaryai Namaha! OM Amriteshwaryai Namaha! *[Rameshio and Myrna join in the chanting.]*

Romeo: *[opens door and peeks out]* Oh, NO! I can't let 'em get my buddies! *[He grabs a frying pan, and runs out. Mundio runs towards Romeo with sword raised and starts slashing at him, but Romeo holds up the frying pan as a shield,*

skillfully fending off the blows. Finally Romeo is driven to his knees, and the pan is knocked out of his hands. Mundio begins swinging the sword for the final death blow... but then accidentally bangs himself on the head with the broadside of the sword, and falls down. Romeo picks up the pan and stands menacingly over Mundio; but then Chandio runs over and puts his sword to Myrna's throat.]

Chandio: Drop the pan, Romeo, or the lady dies.

Rameshio: Better do what he says, Romeo.

Durga Prem: We've just gotta cling to Amma with both hands—she'll protect us. OM Amriteshwaryai Namaha... *[Rameshio and Myrna join him in chanting. Romeo reluctantly drops the pan. Mundio triumphantly grabs him, holding the sword to Romeo's throat.]*

Mundio: Gotcha now, you worm!

Chandio: What a field day! Four new heads for the collection!

Mundio: Can I kill him now boss? Can I? Can I? *[gestures with sword]*

Chandio: Go for it, Mundio! *[Chandio makes a 'slit his throat' gesture. Mundio raises his sword to kill Romeo, and Chandio raises his sword as if to chop off Myrna's head. Dramatic music is heard, as might be used in a television drama before a commercial break. When the music stops, the actors all freeze and become silent, except for Narada and Rama.]*

Rama: Well?? Then what happened?

Narada: What do you mean? What happened where?

Rama: In the *story!*

Narada: Oh yes, the story. What—you don't think that's the end?

Rama: NO!

Narada: Well, I guess you're probably right, but honestly, I don't *remember* what happened next.

Rama: Narada!

Narada: *[takes out magazine]* Well, there's a simple solution—we'll just have to look up the ending in my favorite resource for spiritual teachings, "Immortal Bliss"—you know, this beautiful magazine about Amma I was showing You. *[thumbing through it]* Beautiful photos, brilliant articles, truly a fabulous publication! Immortal Bliss! *[Holds up the magazine and gives the audience a big smile.]* Ah. *[Thumbing through it]* Here we are, 'Romeo Becomes a Sadhu'. Let's see, where were we. Yes! So! Romeo, who hasn't prayed since he was a boy, who's never even met Amma, suddenly cries out...

Romeo: Amma! *[all characters come out of freeze, the chanting resumes, Romeo prays with joined palms]* Amma, please save us! I have faith in you! I believe in you! Please rescue us Amma, and I'll lay my life at your feet!

Chandio: *[laughs demonically]* Praying? There's no God, you fool! Especially not where you're going! *[to Rameshio and Durga Prem]* And as for you idiots! You know what I think of your stupid imaginary God? *[comes down to Shiva Lingam, thumbs his nose at it, laughing; Mundio also laughs. A strong drum beat starts, and Amma's voice is heard singing Chamundayé, a bhajan to Kali. Suddenly, the Goddess Kali bursts forth from out of the Shiva Lingam, carrying a trident.]*

Kali: JAI MA!

Durga Prem: Oh my God! Kali! *[He bows to the ground. Kali does a fiery dance of power, terrifying the demons. Their weapons fall from their hands; they tremble before her as she herds them over to the edge of the 1,000 foot cliff. Romeo, being freed, rushes over and begins to untie the others.]*

Mundio: *[to Chandio]* Do somethin', boss!

Chandio: Like what?!

Mundio: But she's just a woman! *[Mundio draws back his fist defiantly, but Kali simply holds out her hand in a mudra¹⁰.]*

Kali: Hrim!¹¹ *[As if pushed by a tremendous force, Mundio is blown backwards, backpedaling.]*

Mundio: Waaaaagh! *[He falls off the 1,000 foot cliff; an eerie scream is heard for a long way down, then a splat.]*

Kali: *[waving her trident, blood curdling]* JAYA!

Chandio: Oh yeah? Well if you're so tough, how about puttin' down your fork and fightin' fair? *[Kali gladly puts down her trident. Chandio laughs, and draws back one fist.]* Now I've gotcha! *[Kali takes a breath and blows on Chandio. The sound of wind is heard. As if hit by a hurricane gale, Chandio sails backwards off the 1,000 foot cliff. An eerie scream is heard for a long way down, followed by a splat.]*¹²

¹⁰ *mudra*: a hand position which conveys a symbolic meaning.

¹¹ *Hrim*: a sacred mantric syllable, invoking the power of the Divine Mother.

¹² This scene is reminiscent of the *Devi Mahatmyam*, the Hindu scripture in which the Goddess slays two demons, Chanda and Munda.

Kali: JAYA! *[Kali picks up her trident, goes over to where Durga Prem, Rameshio, Romeo and Myrna are kneeling.. From a bag around her waist, Kali pulls out a conch shell, gives it to Durga Prem.]* Tell the world about Amma! She will give you *Parabhakti!*¹³ *[Kali moves in front of Rameshio, takes out a pair of hand-cymbals, gives them to him]* Come and work in Amma's hospice! You will attain Jnanananda! *[takes out a mala of rudraksha beads, puts it around Romeo's neck]* Come to Amritapuri.¹⁴ Seva! Seva! Seva! *[goes to Myrna, gives her a hug]* Beautifully done, daughter. *[takes out a diamond tiara, puts it on Myrna's head]* Lord Krishna awaits you in Vrindavan. You will merge in him, through infinite Love. *[All bow at Kali's feet. She dances back down towards the Shiva Lingam, and raises her trident triumphantly in the air]* JAI BOLO SATGURU MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI DEVI KI --

ALL: JAI! *[Kali then disappears back into the Shiva Lingam as the music ends.]*

Narada: *[to Rama]* Now! Let's see if we can't squeeze a nice romantic ending out of this thing. *[to Romeo]* Hey Romeo! Myrna saved your life five times today! Don't you think she'd make a good wife?

Romeo: Can it, Narada. My love belongs to Amma now. You know that.

Durga Prem: Good for you! *[to Rameshio]* See? He's a real *sadhu!*

Romeo: *[to Myrna]* Thanks, Myrna. *[Myrna joins her palms in a namasté]*

Narada: Aw, c'mon! Myrna—don't ya think he's kinda cute? How about a nice love scene?

Myrna: No way, Narada. Krishna's my all-in-all.

¹³ *Parabhakti:* supreme devotion.

¹⁴ Amritapuri: Amma's ashram in India.

Radha: *[offstage echo-mike]* That's the way!

Narada: Darn! *[To Rama]* Well, how about you, Lord? Don't you want to get married?

Rama: Certainly not. *[proudly]* I'm a renunciate!

Narada: That's what *you* think! In a few years, you're going to show the world the life of the perfect householder.

Rama: *[Rama makes gesture of great disappointment.]* You're kidding!

Narada: Not kidding. *[to audience]* Listen folks, being married is no reason not to attain Enlightenment. Why not become the first God-Realized couple on your block?

Myrna: So long, everybody. *[the astral harp is heard, playing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow"; Myrna clicks her heels together]* There's no place like OM! *[clicks her heels together]* There's no place like OM! *[clicks her heels together]* There's no place like OM! Beam me up, Radha! *[baby angels come in carrying clouds; Myrna exits with the angels, flying.]*

Radha: *[offstage echo-mike]* Welcome OM, darling.

Rama: Narada, tell me something. What happened to the souls of the demons?

Narada: Well, you see, God is actually playing every part in the whole universal drama, and when a divine Incarnation slays a demon, its soul is given Liberation. The Lord just says, 'OK, little angel—take off that dopey demon outfit, and come Home!'

Rama: Wow! I'll have to remember that! But what happens to Romeo and the two monks in the future? *[The threesome are standing on stage, listening.]*

Narada: For that I'll have to check the *Akashic Record*.¹⁵ [*takes out a record album, Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band, and holds it up for the audience to see*] Get it? The Akashic Record! [*laughs*]

Rama: Narada....

Narada: OK, OK. [*reads from the back of the record cover*] Ah, here we are. [*Durga Prem steps forward*] It says here that in a few years Durga Prem's devotion will reach such an extreme state that one night, while having darshan during one of Amma's retreats, his body completely disappears into Amma. Merges in her forever! [*to audience*] It's on video. A bestseller!

Rama: I bet! What about Rameshio? [*Durga Prem steps back, Rameshio steps forward.*]

Narada: Well, after a few years of working in Amma's hospice, Rameshio becomes such an embodiment of compassion that he attains full Realization of God. They finally have to transfer him out of the hospice, because he was bringing everyone who died back to life!

Rama: Wonderful! And Romeo? [*Rameshio steps back, Romeo steps forward.*]

Narada: Let's see. Ah. After many years of serving Amma, Romeo finally attained Self-Realization. He became known far and wide as 'Mozzarella Siddha Yogi,'¹⁶ because whenever he met a hungry person, he'd reach into his heart, and pull out slices of delicious pizza.

Rama: Will wonders never cease?

¹⁵ *Akashic Record*: a ledger containing all past and future events, which is said to exist on the astral plane.

¹⁶ *Siddha*: One who has attained mastery of all Yogic powers; i.e., a God-Realized Master.

Narada: Good question. And, here's the answer, at the very end. "And the wonders of Amma's Grace will *never* cease. Ever. Amen."

Narada & Rama: *[sung]* OM Sri Gurubhyo Namaha!

Narada, Rama, Romeo, Durga Prem, & Rameshio: *[sung]* Hari OM. *[Durga Prem blows conch; Romeo, Rameshio and Durga Prem exit.]*

Narada: Now, for that romantic ending...

[Krishna dances on stage, as a beautiful instrumental version of 'Love Me Tender' is heard. Myrna comes towards the stage through the audience. Krishna reaches out his arms, inviting Myrna closer. Myrna comes on stage, hesitantly advancing towards Krishna; and as the music comes to a climax, she finally, shyly, takes hold of Krishna's hands, gradually lifting her eyes to meet His... and they slowly move towards each other in a sweet embrace. The stage lights all fade to black, except for a dim spotlight on Lord Shiva. Krishna and Myrna exit in the dark. The stage is now empty except for Lord Shiva, who remains seated in meditation.]

THE END